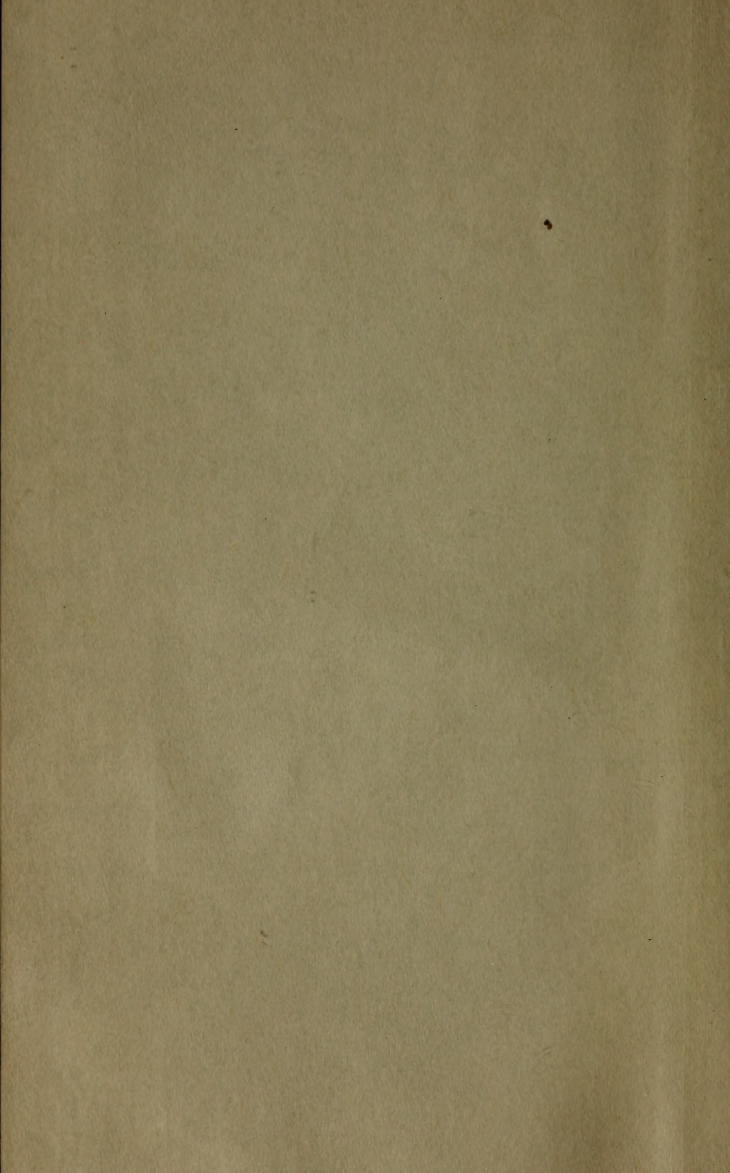
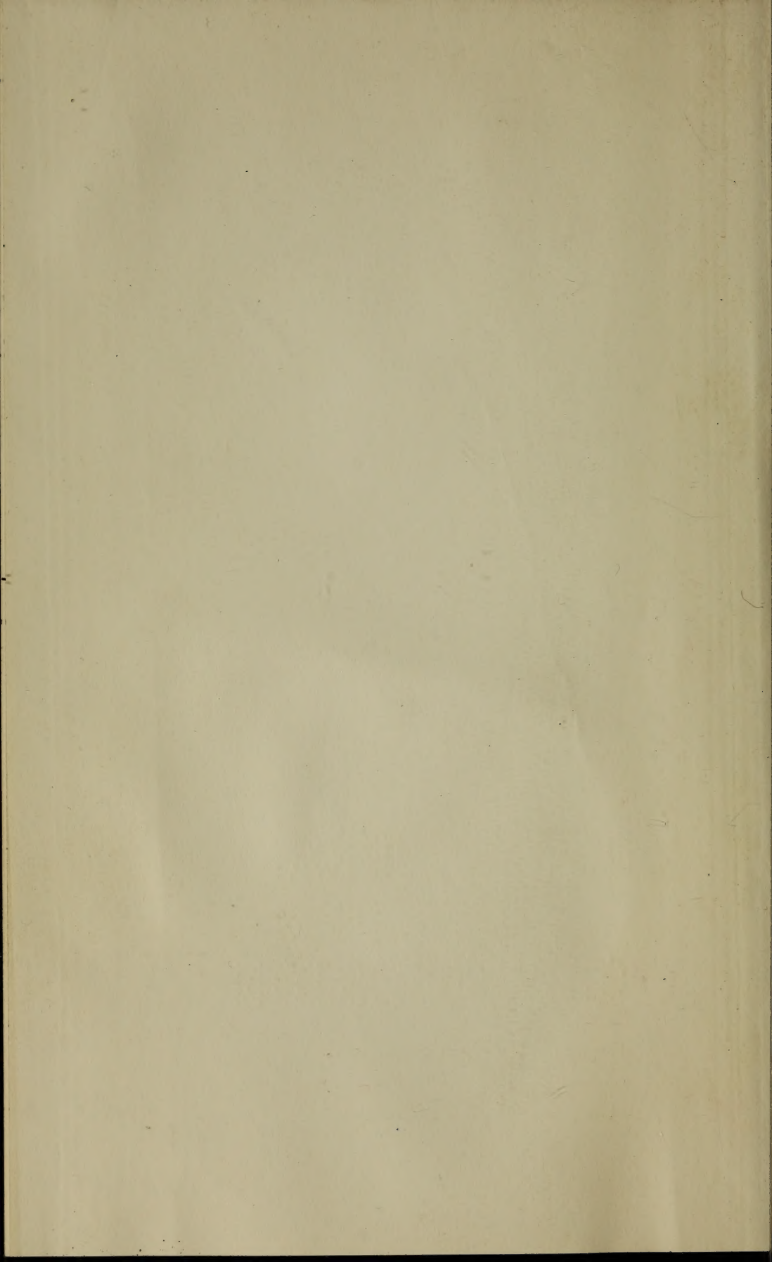


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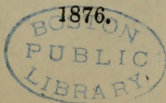
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SHAKSPEARE'S DRAMATIC ART.

BOOK V.

SHAKSPEARE'S COMEDIES.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

SHAKSPEARE'S comedies, as already said in our last volume, may be divided into two main groups or species, which, however, must not be regarded as altogether distinct from one another. Not any one of Shakspeare's comedies can be called *purely* a comedy of fancy, none *purely* a comedy of intrigue or of character. Both species, in fact, represent merely the two chief elements of the same idea of the comic; they are not two essentially different *forms of art*, but simply the two sides of the *same* artistic form. Both species rather represent the same play of manifold accidents which thwart the intentions, the plans and the actions of men, and lead to a happy result through discord and quarrels, perplexities and disappointments; the comedy of fancy under the form of what is unusual, strange and wonderful, the comedy of intrigue under the form of what is usual and ordinary in life. In the first case the designs and actions of men are apparently affected by higher powers directing, averting or perplexing, but in reality they but represent the unaccountable sway and the effectual power of accident; in the latter case, it is the caprices and the desires, the emotions and the passions, the aims and the

resolves of men themselves, that come accidentally in collision, perplexing and paralysing one another, and finally ending in general satisfaction. All of Shakspeare's comedies, therefore, in reality represent the same view of life, the dependence of human life and destiny upon those external circumstances and relations into which men are thrown by accident, whim or caprice, intention or intrigue, and which are ravelled and unravelled by the same agents. And the special character of the several comedies is determined merely by the fact that the poet sets the play of accident and intrigue into motion from different points, derives it from different motives, and causes it to be played out by characters of differently constituted minds. The general view of life is thereby variously modified and receives a formally different setting, but remains, in reality, essentially the same.

For this reason, I place at the head of my discussion, a comedy in which the two sides of the comic (as conceived by Shakspeare) are almost equally blended, and which may accordingly be regarded as the prototype of the Shakspearian conception of comedy. I shall then proceed to the series which is more fantastic in character, and afterwards examine the comedies of intrigue.

CHAPTER I.

TWELFTH NIGHT; OR, WHAT YOU WILL.

THE fantastic is expressed not only by giving the *external* form of life a wonderful shape contrary to common reality, but man himself can be fantastic, can think and act fantastically, by yielding completely to his whims, caprices and illusions, or by allowing himself to be led by the play of chance without having any plan or intention of his own. If we bear this in mind we shall readily discover the fantastic colouring in 'What You Will.' The external form of life here described is exactly such as is usually met with in common reality; there is nothing forced or unnatural in the great likeness between the twins, Viola and Sebastian, although it may be a circumstance of rare occurrence. But almost all the dramatic characters are fantastic, and therefore the inner life, in its connection with the outer world, manifests the most wonderful phenomena—strange freaks and equally strange matters of chance, incidents and complications. The fantastic element reveals itself here, on the one hand, in Viola's whimsical freak to play the man, in the Duke's wilful, half capricious love for Olivia, in the latter's capricious and sudden liking for the disguised Viola, and in the final conversion of both, when the Duke marries Viola, and Olivia the latter's brother. It is no less revealed in the mad freak of Sir Andrew Ague-Cheek becoming a suitor to Olivia. On the other hand, we find it also in the complications occasioned by a number of strange accidents; in the accidental deliverance of Sebastian, in his accidental meeting with Viola in Illyria, in the accidental meetings of Olivia, Sir Andrew, Sir Toby, and the rest. The element of intrigue, however, receives its appointed place in the drama by the deliberateness with which Viola, in her disguise, woos Olivia, in order that the latter may be made to repent of her cruelty to the Duke,

and still more by the pranks played by Maria, Sir Toby and Fabian, upon the braggart Malvolio and the foolish Sir Andrew.

Accordingly, from the very fundamental plan of the play, it is evident that all the manifold motives and levers at the disposal of the comic poet, are here set in motion. Not only have we freaks and whims, mistakes, folly and perversity, quaint notions and resolves, but we see external accidents also, and well-considered intrigues encountering one another and forming a diversified whole. But the question now is, where is the centre of this whole, the point of unity in the composition, which connects the threads of the confused web of many figures and colours, and unites and arranges the manifold forms, actions and incidents into one harmonious whole? What is the reason that the drama, as such, in spite of the confused play of caprice and accident (which forms its substance) does nevertheless not bear within itself the impress of accident or of a conglomeration of caprices, but that, on the contrary, it makes the impression of an harmonious and well ordered whole? However difficult this question may be to answer in the case of Shakspeare's tragedies, and still more so his comedies, yet it is nevertheless the main and fundamental question, the decision of which essentially determines the estimate we are to form of his dramas, as of every work of art.

At the first glance it might seem as if in 'What You Will,' the end in view was a comic exhibition of *love*, which of itself can as well form the substance of a comedy as the fundamental theme of a tragedy. However, we have here nothing to do with the real and, in this sense, the significant passion of love. Love here, appears rather as a mere freak of the imagination, a mere glittering kaleidoscope of sentiment, a gay dress in which the soul envelopes itself and which it changes with the various seasons. The Duke's passion for Olivia bursts out into flame as suddenly for Viola, as her heart is kindled with love for him; Olivia's fondness for Viola is quite satisfied with the substitution of the brother, who, on his makes no objection about being put in his sister's place and Malvolio's, and Sir Andrew's affection for Olivia is

a mere bubble. Nay, Antonio's very friendship for Sebastian is also somewhat accidental and fantastic in character. Thus the playful capriciousness of love appears only to be the main spring to the merry game of life which is here unrolled before our eyes; it is only a prominent motive for the development of the action, not the nucleus and gravitating point of the whole.

The title of the piece, as I think, points to this even though but in indistinct and indefinite tones. By the choice of this curious title which stands apparently in no relation whatever to its substance, Shakspeare wishes to give us a hint as to his intention, a symbolical intimation as to the manner in which the whole is to be understood—Twelfth Night was the prelude to the merry season of Shrovetide, and was passed amid all kinds of convivial games and jokes. The 'bean king' who was elected by the lot of a bean which was baked in a cake (hence by pure chance) had then to select a 'queen,'* and established a burlesque kingdom; his commands had to be punctually obeyed and every one gave free reins to their fun and merriment in this airy kingdom. Games of hazard, also, were exceptionally permitted on this evening, and Tieck justly remarks, that even in the play itself, Sebastian, Viola and Maria (to whom we may also add the Duke and Olivia) win great and important prizes in the lottery of life, and that a blank is drawn by Malvolio alone, who fancies he has the richest prize safe in his own hands. The title also corresponds perfectly with the nature and character of the piece, which—as is easily seen—exhibits life itself as a Twelfth Night, as a merry, fantastic bean-festival. The second title of 'What You Will,' is, in reality, even more significant. It indeed refers to the relation between the public and the play, but not (as has been supposed) in the quite inadmissible sense, that the piece was to give and to represent whatever the spectators wished. This is not the case; the play rather creates what it wishes, and the better it is the can that which it gives be different from what it The title is rather intended to signify that that which men all like to see represented is ever the same;

* Drake, *Life and Times of Shakspeare*, i. 127 f.

namely, a chequered, a varied life, rich in incidents and crossed by misfortunes and complications, one that excites interest and keeps up a state of suspense, but which, nevertheless, does not exceed the bounds of ordinary human life, even though it leads to a happy and harmonious ending through unusual, strange and winding paths. We are, in reality, all as little fond of an existence which passes with nothing unusual, surprising or exciting to the imagination, where everything happens according to well-considered aims and objects, as we are of the reverse, a life governed solely by chance, whim and caprice. We would all prefer the greatest possible equality in the mixture of the usual and the unusual, of accident and intention, of whim and reflection, imagination and reason. It is not merely the experiencing such a life, the very beholding it produces that gaiety, that inward contentment at which we are all aiming. And thus Shakspeare could with justice—especially of this one of his comedies—maintain that it represented ‘What You (all) Will.’

Were it necessary, a closer examination of the leading *characters* would still more clearly establish the interpretation which I have given of the title, and thereby of the play itself. I shall content myself with drawing attention to a few points. Viola is in so far the heroine of the piece, as the whole play originates with and is kept in motion by her and her disguise. And yet her character is given in light touches and delicate colours, and is composed of but a few simple elements. It consists, so to say, only in the apparent contradiction between a tender, gentle, sensitive, longing heart, which, being ‘deeply skilled in the science of love,’ retires in maidenly shyness within itself, and a bold, witty and imaginative mind that whispers to her all kinds of mischievous ideas, which she involuntarily follows from her innate pleasure in romance and in what is fantastic. She thereby falls into situations which cause her anxiety and embarrassment, because, on the other hand, she has not the courage or the practical cleverness possessed by Portia (in the ‘Merchant of Venice’) whose mind is somewhat akin to her own. To solve harmoniously this apparent contradiction, which

places the two elements of the comic—fancy and intrigue—in close juxtaposition, and to form a true and life-like character out of these heterogeneous elements, is a task that Shakspeare leaves to the talent of the actors. In pieces like this and similar ones, he cannot well do otherwise; he has to content himself with giving mere hints of the characters, he has, so to say, but to touch the light pollen of the characterisation; a deeper development and deeper motives would obstruct and retard the rapid, easy, graceful movement of the action.

The other characters, the musical and dreamy Duke, who suns himself in his own love, and spends his time in brooding over his own sorrows;—Olivia, in her girlish self-will, hard to please yet so easy to win over, so serious, strict, and yet so graceful, who is so cold, so shy, so virtuously reserved before she is in love, and so inconsiderate in her desires, so devoted after her love is aroused by contradiction, and has burst forth into a bright flame;—Antonio, with his fantastic friendship for Sebastian, and Sebastian with his healthy, vigorous, youthful nature, taking with one snatch that which the Duke has in vain endeavoured to obtain by entreaties, lamentations and sighs;—the roguish, ingenious Maria, and her clever helper's help Fabian—all these characters are sketched in such fine outlines, the transparent colours and delicate lights and shades of which are so harmoniously blended with one another that, only in this manner, and in no other, could they be the agents of such a light, airy, hazy and yet deeply significant composition. The most carefully worked out contrast is that between the Fool by profession and the involuntary fools, Malvolio, Sir Andrew and Sir Toby. While the latter, in their own conceit and foolishness, unconsciously draw the cap and bells over their own ears, the former, in his self-adopted mental garb of motley colours moves with inimitable adroitness, and pins the lappets of his wit to the back of all the other characters. The meaning of the poem is, so to say, centred in him. He alone, in full consciousness, contemplates life as a merry Twelfth Night, in which every one has, in fact, only to play his allotted part to the greatest possible amusement of himself and others. He does not wish to be

more or less than a fool in the great mad-house of the world; on this account he has an unconquerable aversion to all starched common-sense and calculating plans, to that hollow unmeaning gravity which cannot understand a joke, because it fancies its proudly-adopted dignity thereby injured, and which is never able to rise above the petty, selfish interests of its own dear self; this accounts for his dislike to Malvolio. Again, he alone has respect for his cap and bells, for he is aware that fun and laughter, joke and jest are the seasoning of life, and that there is more depth and sense in humorous folly like his own, than in the sour-mindedness of so-called sensible people, who are in reality devoid of true sense, because the poetry of life, all the higher interests of man which extend beyond common prose, are unintelligible to them.

The chief incidents of the *action* are spontaneously evolved from the accidental or intentional encounter of these characters. Two groups stand opposed to one another; on the one hand the Duke, Olivia, Viola and her brother, on the other, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Olivia's household. Both of these groups are again linked to each other, and interact with and counteract one another. In the first place the obstinacy of love, and the freak of accident carry on their bantering play with the first group—Viola, who merely wished to trifle with the love of others, becomes very love-sick herself;—the Duke, a slave to the scornful Olivia, is happily released from his chains in order to cure Viola;—Olivia, by way of punishment for her cruelty, falls in love with a girl;—all, in the end, are saved by the matter of chance which is introduced by Sebastian. In the second group Sir Toby and Sir Andrew are, in the most amusing manner, made the dupes of their own folly and perversity, while Malvolio, in his pride of virtue and puritanical severity, but blinded by conceit, is made the laughing-stock of the intrigues of the Clown, Maria and Fabian. And, in order to increase the complication, Antonio and Sebastian are also drawn into the wide net of accident and error which the dramatic characters have drawn over their own heads. Chance, whim, and caprice, however, again unravel the intricate web, and each, by some good fortune, obtains that which is good for him or herself. The

common-place prosaic Malvolio alone, and the equally prosaic Sir Andrew, justly reap mockery and derision as their due; for common prose, which, in truth, is always immoral as well, is invariably wrong in the world of comedy. The ingenuity and grace, the ease and playfulness in the flow of the language of this drama must be self-evident to every reader. Thus here also, characterisation, action (invention), and diction stand in the most perfect harmony with one another. Everything grows forth so organically out of the fundamental plan of the whole, that the composition here is not less masterly than in the case of Shakspeare's best tragedies.

In the same way as this pleasing drama stands midway between the two series of Shakspeare's comedies, so in regard to date also, it belongs to the middle of the poet's career. There is no longer any doubt that it was written about 1600. This opinion is supported by the treatment of the language and the versification, by the tone and character of the whole, more especially however by the view of life represented, and which is not usually met with either in a youth or in a man verging upon old age, but in a man's best and most vigorous years, when the gifted mind has reached the climax of life. But external testimonies, also, confirm the supposition which is based upon the style and character of the whole. The allusion in Ben Jonson's comedy 'Every Man out of his Humour,' which appeared in 1599, and which Tieck refers to 'What You Will,' is indeed unsafe and indefinite. But the reasons given by Malone, Chalmers, Drake, and others—who place it at a much later date (1613-14)—are of no greater value, and in themselves of no weight whatever, compared with the considerations which language and the character of the whole, place in the opposite scale, even were they not refuted by external, historical evidence. These critics supposed the words in Act ii. 5, 'I will not give my part of this sport for a pension of thousands to be paid from the Sophy'—to contain an allusion to the allowance in money, enjoyed in 1612, by Sir Robert Shirley, as Persian ambassador in London; and in Act iii. 1, they found a reference to a drama of Dekker's and Webster's which appeared in 1607. How little such individual passages are to be trusted—

which, even where they appear more definite, might easily have been inserted by the poet or the actor upon certain occasions, and subsequently come to be employed in the text—is now proved by a Diary, discovered by Hunter and belonging to a certain Manningham (probably John Manningham) a barrister of the Middle Temple. By this diary it is authentically established that ‘What You Will’ had been played before the benchers as early as the 2nd of February, 1602, at the feast of Candlemas.* Collier thinks that it may have appeared on the boards of Blackfriars shortly before. This, however, is a mere hypothesis which cannot prevent our fixing the date one year earlier. The play of ‘What You Will’ was first printed in the folio edition of 1623.

Whether Shakspeare borrowed his subject from one of Bandello’s novels or from Rich’s translation of it (under the title of ‘Apollonius and Silla’) in ‘His Farewell to Militarie Profession’ (1581), or from the old Italian comedy *Gl’ Inganni* to which Manningham refers, is difficult to decide. It is possible that Manningham confounds the *Inganni* with another Italian comedy, *Gl’ Ingannati, commedia degli Academici Intronati di Siena*, which was also founded upon Bandello’s novel, and likewise appeared as early as the sixteenth century. The latter, at all events as regards the relative position of the characters, the situations and the course of the action, has more affinity to ‘What You Will’ than to the *Inganni*. Probably, however, Shakspeare followed Rich’s version of Bandello’s novel, and the greater resemblance of his work to the comedy of the ‘Academician of Siena,’ is owing to the latter having likewise closely followed Bandello. And yet Shakspeare might also have become acquainted with the main features of the story from Belleforest’s French translation in his *Histoires Tragiques*. J. Klein, in his excellent history of the drama, makes the remark that Rich’s ‘History of Apollonius and Silla,’ which Shakspeare made use of in ‘What You Will,’ cannot be called a translation of Bandello’s novel, for it keeps much closer to Cinthio’s novel (the eighth of the 3rd *Decad.*), whereas Bandello’s probably followed the earlier comedy of *Gl’*

* Collier’s *History*, i. 327, and his *Shakspeare*, iii. 317.

Ingannati. By a careful analysis of the latter comedy, as well as of the one entitled *Gl' Inganni* by Nice Secco (which also comes into consideration here), Klein* proves that neither can be regarded as the source of 'What You Will,' but that Shakspeare evidently made use of Rich's narrative and dramatised it in his own fashion.

In what way Shakspeare has made use of the novel, the reader may discover for himself by consulting Echtermeyer, Henschel and Simrock,† or Bandello himself (ii. 36). It will be found that in this case, also, the piece, as regards invention, is almost entirely Shakspeare's own.‡

* *Geschichte des Dramas*, vol. iv. p. 749 ff. 801 ff.

† Simrock, ii. 161, iii. 254 f.

‡ Rich's *Apollonius* and *Silla* has been reprinted by Collier in the second volume of his *Shakspeare's Library*.

CHAPTER II.

AS YOU LIKE IT. THE COMEDY OF ERRORS. A WINTER'S TALE.

1. AS YOU LIKE IT.

THIS charming comedy is also one of the mixed species, but with a decided preponderance of the fanciful element. Even a summary estimate of the contents of the piece will, I think, prove this most clearly.

We have two royal dukes, one of whom has unlawfully (we are not told how) driven the other from the throne; the exiled Duke has thereupon fled into the Forest of Arden where, with his followers, he leads a free and fantastic sort of life; two other aristocratic brothers, the elder of whom so persecutes the younger that he seeks refuge with the exiled Duke in the Forest of Arden; two princesses, the daughters of the two dukes, deeply attached to one another, one of whom is exiled and is accompanied by the other, likewise wend their way to the Forest; two fools, a merry one and a melancholy one; and lastly shepherds and shepherdesses described according to an idealised view of nature—such are the principal characters of the play. Their graceful groupings and the contrast in which they stand to one another enliven the romantic wildernesses of the Forest, and their various situations, relations and characters determine all that takes place in the play. Taken singly nothing that happens is actually contrary to nature, there are no extraordinary or unusual beings or phenomena; taken singly every character, every situation and action might belong to ordinary reality. It is only the introduction of lions and serpents into the mountainous scenery of Europe which gives us a gentle intimation that we are standing upon the ideal soil of poetic fancy. And still more emphatically is this expressed in the development and the composition—the style and the tone, the spirit and

the character of the piece in general, and in the position and relation of the individual parts in particular—in short, in the totality of the circumstances and situations, actions and events. We are clearly given to understand that the drama is not a picture of common experience, but that it conceives life from a peculiarly poetical point of view, and that it is intended to exhibit a fantastic reflex of life in the mirror of caprice and humour. For if we consider the whole somewhat more closely, we shall at once have to admit that such things as the play presents, do not and could not happen in actual experience; that such a romantic mode of life in the loneliness of a forest is but a poetical dream; that, in fact, real life cannot be carried on or treated in the manner in which it is by almost all the persons represented; that the good Duke, Orlando, Rosalinde, Celia, Jacques and Touchstone, are figures which the realistic mind would call oddities, enthusiasts, romancists; that, in reality, a character like the unrighteous Duke would not readily be converted by a recluse hermit, or a man like Oliver de Bois be wholly changed by a single magnanimous action on the part of his persecuted brother.*

It may, therefore, be asked wherein, amid this apparent unreality, lies the poetical truth of the piece? And which is the internal bond that gathers together all the confused and strangely involved threads, forming them into one harmonious whole? We must bear in mind that it is the comic view of life which here forms the basis of the drama, and accordingly that the truth of human life is not represented directly, but by means of contrast, that is, by accident, caprice and waywardness paralysing one another, and by the true agent of human life—the eternal order of things—being brought vividly into view. This becomes

* Gervinus, *Shakespeare Commentaries*, finds both cases quite natural and in accordance with the characters. But even though internal motives and inducements might be imagined for such changes, still they are not given in the piece itself, not even intimated in the faintest manner; the change of sentiment takes place suddenly without either preparation or development. Therefore, if we take the two characters, *not* in the sense in which Gervinus conceives them, but as Shakspeare presents them to us, they appear inconstant, changeable, and slaves to their caprices and inclinations.

clearly evident when we consider how the unrighteous caprice (whatever may have been its motive), which suddenly drove the good old Duke into exile, as suddenly reverts against itself, destroying its own work and restoring what it had wrongfully appropriated; how, in like manner, by a similar change of sentiment, the right relation between the two brothers de Bois is also brought about; how the love between Orlando and Rosalinde, between Celia and Oliver—which arose suddenly by the concurrence of circumstances—attains its object by an equally sudden change of circumstances and relations; and lastly, how the coyness of the shepherdess Phoebe is overcome much in the same way, and she is in the end united to her faithful, good-natured simpleton of a lover.

Thus the general comic view of life is reflected throughout the whole play, and forms the foundation and platform upon which the action moves. If, however, it be now asked what is the *special* standpoint from which the poet has here taken his view of life, or—what is the same thing—where is the central point of unity which gives the play its peculiar stamp, we shall again find that the title furnishes us with some clue. For the title is so striking, so original, so completely without any reference to the action represented, as such, that we have to declare it to be, either utterly senseless and meaningless, or assign to it a concealed reference to the internal significance and to the ideal meaning of the whole.* Like the similar title of 'What You Will,' it has been referred to the relation between the play and the public (A. W. von Schlegel), and has been so interpreted as to convey the meaning that the piece was intended to present itself to the spectators in any form

* Gervinus decides in favour of the first alternative, because the title does not suit his conception and interpretation of the drama, so that either his conception or the title must be meaningless. But why Shakspeare—quite contrary to his usual habit, and contrary to the theatrical custom of the day (which was fond of a very elaborate title, describing the contents of the piece)—should be supposed to give just this play (which Gervinus thinks preaches a serious moral) a completely senseless and unmeaning title, when, in fact, he did not readily pen an unmeaningless word, and why he should be supposed to stick such at the head of one of his plays, is to my mind perfectly unintelligible.

they pleased. But this, in fact, as already pointed out, is not and *cannot* be the case. On the other hand, it is perhaps possible (as Tieck thinks) that the title alludes to a passage in Ben Jonson's 'Cynthia's Revels,' and to the interspersed sallies it contains against the easy and apparently irregular and arbitrary compositions of Shakspeare and the earlier School. But the allusion does not exactly hold good, for the only words in B. Jonson's comedy that can be meant are 'If you like it,' whereas the heading to Shakspeare's play is 'As you like it,' and thus even Tieck's interpretation: 'If you like it, then it is a comedy, that is, a comedy *par excellence*,' is rendered meaningless. The same applies to the equally far-fetched reference to the words: 'If you like it, so, and yet I will be yours in dutie, if you be mine in favours,' in the Preface to Lodge's pastoral and chivalrous romance,* from which Shakspeare drew the subject of this play? Shakspeare perhaps intended by means of the title to smile at the vain endeavours of his opponents to bring his fanciful comedies (which certainly differed very widely from Ben Jonson's) into discredit; but even the circumstance of his changing the *If* into *As* proves that he would not have chosen the title, had it not borne within itself some independent significance, some reference to the meaning and spirit of the play itself. Such a reference, I think, it is not difficult to find upon a more careful examination. In the first place it is evident that 'As You Like It,' both in style and character, stands in close affinity to 'What You Will.' The difference in reality is only that in the latter case the element of intrigue plays a prominent part while it is wholly wanting in the first case. The motives which in the present case set the whole in motion are merely chance, the unintentional encounter of persons and incidents, and the freaks, caprices and humours, the sentiments, feelings and emotions to which the various personages recklessly give way in what they do and leave undone. Nowhere does the representation treat of conscious plans, definite resolves, decided aims and objects; nowhere do we find preconsidered,

* *Rosalynde*: *Euphues' Golden Legacy*, etc., 1590, re-issued in 1592 and 1598, and again recently reprinted in Collier's *Shakspeare's Library*, vol. i.

or, in fact, deeper motives proceeding from the inmost nature of the characters. The characters themselves—even though clearly and correctly delineated—are generally drawn in light, hurried outlines—but are full of life, gay and bold in action, and quick in decision; they appear, as already said, either inconstant, variable, going from one extreme to the other, or possess such a vast amount of imagination, sensitiveness and love for what is romantic and adventurous, that their conduct to a prosaic mind can only appear thoughtless, capricious and arbitrary, and such a mind would be inclined to delare them all fools, oddities and fantastic creatures (in the same way as Sir Oliver Martext in the play itself, iii. 3, calls the whole company in the forest ‘fantastical knaves’). And, in fact, all do exactly what and as they please; each gives him or herself up, in unbridled wilfulness, to good or evil, according to his or her own whims, moods or impulses whatever the consequences may prove to be. Each looks upon, and turns and shapes life as it pleases him or herself. The Forest of Arden is their stage, and with its fresh and free atmosphere, its mysterious chiaro-scuro, its idyllic scenery for huntsmen and shepherds, is, at the same time, the fitting scene for the realisation of a mode and conception of life such as is here described. It is a life such as not only must please the dramatic personages themselves, but would please every one, were such a life only possible; it is the poetical reflex of a life *as you like it*, light and smooth in its flow, unencumbered by serious tasks, free from the fetters of definite objects, and from intentions difficult to realise; an amusing play of caprice, of imagination, and of wavering sensations and feelings. A life like this, however, is possible only in the Forest of Arden, in the midst of similar scenery, under similar circumstances and conditions, and with similar companions and surroundings. At court, in more complicated relations, in a state of impure feelings and selfish endeavours, it would lose its poetical halo, its innocence and gaiety, and become untruth, hypocrisy, injustice and violence, as is proved by the reigning Duke, his courtiers and Oliver de Bois. The point of the piece seems to me to lie in this contrast; but care had to be taken not to make the point too pointed, not to make

it a serious moral conflict. If Shakspeare wished to give the play a humorous character, the gay appearance of 'as you like it,' he could not solve the contrast except by allowing selfish injustice and violent arbitrariness to become untrue to themselves, and to turn into their opposites—of course, in perfect accordance with the plan, the meaning and spirit of the whole, but nevertheless entirely without motives. This, at the same time, unravels the other complications into which the play of accident and caprice and their own 'as we like it,' have involved the dramatic personages, and the piece closes in perfect harmony inasmuch as what is right and rational is everywhere happily brought about. Thus the dominion, and the very ground hitherto held by accident and caprice, excessive imagination and adventurous romance, is entirely withdrawn from them.*

Shakspeare's intention—that is, the sense in which he conceived Lodge's narrative and transformed it into a drama—which, as I think, is clearly enough manifested in the spirit and character of the whole, as well as reflected in the several parts, is concentrated, and, so to say, condensed in the second and more personal contrast in which the two fools of the piece stand to one another. They and the unimportant figure of the shepherdess whom Touchstone chooses as his sweetheart, are the only persons whom Shakspeare did not find in Lodge's narrative, but freely invented. This addition, however, is in so far of great importance as it alone gives the original subject-matter a different character and colouring, and,

* Gervinus, in his moralising tendency burdens even this light creation of Shakspeare's humour (which, as it were, itself plays with its deeply-hidden meaning) with a highly important and dull moral. According to him it is self-control, equanimity, and calmness in external suffering and internal passion, the value of which has to be set forth. But it is impossible to discuss such subjects with him, for in fact he is naturally wanting in all sense for what is humorous, fantastic, and romantic. Shakspeare is dear to him only because he finds his works to contain a solid, historico-political moral, such as he (justly) delights in. But, however right he may be in this, he nevertheless overlooks the fact that Shakspeare is a poet as well, and that consequently he delights in what is poetical even in the form of what is humorous, fantastic and romantic. This, in my opinion, is so clearly evident in *As You Like It*, that there is no necessity to give any special refutation of Gervinus' opinion.

so to say, forms the ideal norm, which determines the other alterations introduced by Shakspeare. The two fools, by virtue of the contrast in which they stand to each other, mutually complete each other. The melancholy Jacques is not the fool by profession, he appears rather to be simply a comic character *par excellence*; but his meditative superficiality, his witty sentimentality, his merry sadness have taken so complete a hold of his nature, that it seems to contradict itself, and therefore upon a closer examination distinctly bears the impress of folly, although it certainly is an original kind of folly. The contradiction into which he has fallen, he involuntarily and unconsciously carries about with him, for it is rooted in his very life and character. Of good birth and education, and not without the taste for what is good and noble, but easily led, weak, wanting in independence, and a slave to his easily-excited feelings, he had in his day been a profligate, who in indulging his caprices, desires and passions, had drained the enjoyments of life to the very dregs. And because he found no lasting satisfaction in them, he has withdrawn himself from the world—not having strength or inclination to conceive life from its other and right side—but continues to cherish and foster his inclinations, caprices and humours; these, however, have now taken the form of sentimental melancholy, and express themselves more in speeches full of black views of life, than in actions. This melancholy, this contempt of life and men, this sentimental slander and slanderous sentimentality not only please and amuse himself, but he carries them ostentatiously about, and has found a fitting soil for them in the company around the good Duke. In reality he only acts the melancholy misanthrope, the world-despising hermit, he is himself unconscious of the part he is playing, is not conscious that he is wearing a mere mask behind which lie concealed his old love of life, his old caprices, inclinations and sympathies. His observations therefore are in most cases certainly meditative and profound, and he fancies that on their wings he will be able to rise far above the sphere of ordinary mortals; but he is not aware that this meditation when carefully examined is after all very superficial in its contradictory one-sidedness. His effemi-

nate sentimentality he considers to be genuine, deep feeling, and yet it is not only full of witty points, but, so to say, the bow from which he shoots forth the arrows of his scorn and slander. His melancholy does not call forth tears of sorrow but of joy, and these cause more merriment than the most exuberant frolic, not only to others but in reality to himself also. While the other characters in the foreground look upon life more or less in the light of a gay and festive game of humour and of frolic, he apparently regards it as a sombre funeral procession, where every mourner, in tears and lamentations, is advancing towards his own grave. However, while in the case of the other personages, the merriment of the play bears within itself a hidden seriousness, in his case, on the contrary, the solemn funeral procession changes insensibly into a merry procession of fools. Thus he is always his own counterpart, and at the same time always the very thing which he attacks and combats. In a word, he is exactly like the fool by profession, the personification of capriciousness, as well as of the love of wit and ridicule, except that he unconsciously and involuntarily wears a cloak of melancholy and sentimentality. Hence his honest admiration of the real, acknowledged fool, and his wish to be able himself to play the part of the privileged fool.

The fool whom Jacques so envies, who is his counterpart and mental kinsman, is the merry clown Touchstone. He is a genuine old English clown—in the Shakspearian form—such as we have already met with in ‘What You Will’; a fool with the jingling cap and bells, one who is and wishes to be a fool; the same personification of caprice and ridicule, and with the same keen perception of the faults and failings of mankind as Jacques, but a fool with his own knowledge and consent, and not merely passive but active also. He speaks, acts and directs his whole life in accordance with the capricious folly and foolish capriciousness which he considers to be the principles of human existence. While therefore the other lovers are in pursuit of their high ideals of beauty, amiability and virtue, and yet do not in reality attain anything beyond the common human standard, he takes to himself quite an ordinary, silly, ugly, peasant girl;

he loves her, in fact, just because she pleases him, and she pleases him just because he loves her. This is the obstinacy of love in its full force, as conceived by Shakspeare in his comedies. And yet this capriciousness which apparently ridicules itself, at the same time, contains a significant trait in which he exhibits his inmost nature, a trait of what is simple, natural, and common to all men, in contrast to what is exaggerated and unnatural, and to all that which is sentimental, eccentric and fantastic—a genuine human trait which, however, he had hitherto been unable to show. While, further, all the other characters have chosen the secluded free life of the Forest of Arden on account of their outward circumstances or inward impulse, in short, with good reason or free will, he alone has gone there without any occasion or reason whatever; he has even done so against his own inclination as the good cheer at court suited him far better; in other words he has done so deliberately in the actual sense of the word. And yet it is just in this that he again, under the mask of folly, shows a trait of genuine human nature, noble unselfishness and fidelity. Lastly, while all the other characters appear more or less like the unconscious play-balls of their own caprices and whims, feelings and impulses, he proves himself to be the one that makes game both of himself and of all the others; by this very means, however, he shows his true independence and freedom. And inasmuch as he consciously and intentionally makes himself a fool and gives free reins to his caprices, freaks and humours, he, at least, shows that he possesses the first necessary elements of true freedom, the consciousness of, and sovereignty over himself. He the professed Fool may frankly be declared the most rational person of the whole curious company, for he alone invariably knows his own mind; in regarding everything as sheer folly, he, at the same time takes it up in the humour in which it is meant to be understood. Accordingly, in *Touchstone* (who, as it were, personifies the humour which pervades the whole), we find all the perversities and contradictions of a life and mode of *life as you like it* reflected in a concave mirror; but this exterior, at the same time, conceals the poetic truth of the reverse side

of the whole. Therefore we find a striking contrast to him in Sir Oliver Martext, the very embodiment of common prose, who will not suffer anything to lead him from his own text, but in doing this thoroughly perverts the text of true living reality, the ideal, poetical substance of the book of life.

The other characters also are conceived, arranged and grouped in as significant a manner; in as pure a harmony, and in as vivid a contrast. In 'Twelfth Night' Viola was the heroine, here we have Rosalinde. In comedies, Shakspeare is especially fond of assigning the principal parts to the female sex. Thus in 'The Winter's Tale,' 'Love's Labour Lost,' 'All's Well That Ends Well,' 'The Merchant of Venice,' and in 'Much Ado About Nothing,' etc. Woman, with her natural tendency to intrigue and equally great capriciousness, thoughtlessness, and inconsistency is, in fact, particularly suited to be the bearer of the comic action according to his idea of comedy. In the case of Rosalinde, Shakspeare has made the dangerous attempt of embodying humour—the comic in its capriciousness or fancifulness—in the form of a *woman*, or rather, which is still more venturesome, in that of a *girl*. Rosalinde possesses all the qualities with which we became acquainted in Viola, except that her nature is freer, gayer, and more frank. It is only at times that mischievous ideas come into Viola's head, otherwise she is absorbed in dreamy, serious and melancholy thoughts. Rosalinde, on the other hand, is absolute mischief, absolute caprice, and exuberance of spirits; she even makes fantastic game of her serious love for Orlando. Her playfulness, however, is not like that of a well-bred princess, but the innate grace and *naïveté* of a free child of nature, whose very freedom gives her noble and beautiful nature all the charms of genuine good-breeding. She possesses as little practical cleverness as Viola, and in this respect is inferior to Portia, because described more as a girl than the latter, who, although unmarried, and presented to us in the full bloom of youth, can be imagined only as a mature and complete woman in contrast to the budding girl Rosalinde. However, she is less in need of such cleverness, because, owing to her bold frankness, her gaiety and *naïveté*, she is not easily em-

barrassed and would not readily enter into any complicate business where cleverness and practical intelligence were required. For in spite of her brilliant, inexhaustible wit, she nevertheless does not possess a spark of that knowledge of the world which is able to grapple with the affairs of common life. Her wit and her judgment are rooted wholly in the poetical soil of a rich imagination, and in a delicate, pure state of feeling out of which her whole being has, so to say, sprung forth. When severed from this soil, her nature becomes withered and stunted like a tender flower that has been taken from its native earth and transplanted into a foreign land. At her uncle's court, Rosalinde appears inclined to be melancholy; for her nature, in spite of the fulness of the natural truth of her womanly heart, is, in regard to mind, so ethereal, so romantically poetic, so genially eccentric that the rude breath of prosaic reality could not but destroy its loveliest blossoms. On this very account it would be useless to endeavour, in a detailed delineation, to point out the several delicate outlines with which Shakspeare's masterly skill and genial hand has sketched the charming picture. I fear that even the few gentle allusions I have already given may have rather damaged than benefited the picture which the reader's own imagination had formed.

The same may be said of the other characters; their fundamental traits—the noble frankness and candour, and the imperishable force of a good disposition as exhibited in Orlando—the pure feeling for humanity, the greatness of mind and goodness of heart, in the amiable, jovial old Duke, whom misfortune has made but the nobler, the happier, and the more cheerful—the simple, touching fidelity of Adam—the self-sacrificing, heartfelt friendship of Celia—in short, all, in spite of their strangeness, thoughtlessness, and perversity, reflect so much of what is beautiful in humanity, and are so clearly brought forward, that a closer analysis would only destroy the delicate, poetical fragrance with which the whole is imbued. It must, however, be obvious to every reader that the characters are all conceived and worked out entirely in keeping with the meaning of *as you like it*, which, indeed, is the fundamental theme of the whole. The fantastic

capriciousness which shows itself either as the inner motive or the outward impulse to their resolves and actions, rules the best and noblest, as well as the worst and lowest characters in the most manifold modifications. This is clearly evident from the course of the *action*. The arbitrary, unlawful dethronement of the good Duke forms the basis of the plot, the unreasonable persecution of Orlando by his brother—which is founded on a completely indefinite and undefinable cause of hate—his whim to fight the king's wrestler, likewise, the equally unreasonable banishment of Rosalinde—whom her uncle had long tolerated at his court, and suddenly drives into exile without any cause—are the first and chief motives of its advance. In the Forest of Arden all then abandon themselves to the most unrestrained and most diversified play of caprice and fancy. The play proceeds in this way till the wicked brother and the unlawful Duke are brought to see their transgressions and are converted, and Rosalinde throws aside her disguise. Thus even the mainsprings of the action are in perfect accordance with the meaning and spirit of the play. All the various parts form one perfect harmony, round which play the most graceful melodies; all is so delicate and ingenious, so free, so fresh and gay, so full of bantering humour and genial exuberance of spirits, that everyone who possesses the sense and understanding for the poetical chord here struck, must acknowledge this comedy as deserving the first prize; those who do not possess these requisites for its appreciation will pass it by with indifference or wholly misunderstand it.

Most critics assign the play to the year 1600. That it did not appear till after 1598 is certain, not only from the fact that Meres does not mention it in the often-quoted passage in his *Palladis Tamia*, but also from a line occurring in the play itself (act iii. s. 5.) taken from Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander,' which did not appear in print till 1598. Edm. Capell's supposition that 'As You Like It' belongs to the year 1605, is an arbitrary one, and is proved untenable by the fact that the play is entered at Stationers' Hall as early as August 4th, 1600.* The edition which he

* In the case of this entry which includes two others of Shakspeare's pieces, *Henry V.* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, the year is indeed not

supposes to have existed, may have actually appeared, but it has been wholly lost. Probably, however, obstacles were placed in the way of its being printed—perhaps by Shakspeare's own theatrical company, which would testify to the unusually great popularity of the piece. It presumably did not appear in print till in the folio of 1623.

2. THE COMEDY OF ERRORS.

We must to a certain extent regard 'The Comedy of Errors,' as the *pendant* to 'As You Like It.' It is evidently one of Shakspeare's youthful works and was probably written about 1591.* This is supported not only by several circumstances, such as the frequent occurrence of rhymes and the long-drawn Alexandrines (doggerel verse), employed by the earlier English dramatists, but also by the greater carefulness and regularity of the language and versification, which is a clear indication of a poet who is still striving to win the approbation of the public by all the external means at his command—means to which Shakspeare subsequently paid less attention. Another proof of its early origin is the fresh, youthful atmosphere of joke and jest which pervades the whole, a naïve pleasure in what is jocose and laughable for its own sake, and which, not being yet burdened by the weight of years, moves more lightly and more on the surface of things, and without that power and depth of humour which distin-

specified, but obviously only because the writer wished to spare himself the trouble of repeating the date which was given at the head of the preceding entry.

* Compare Chalmers' *Supplementary Apology*, p. 274 ff., whose sound arguments against Malone and others are now approved of by the majority of the most eminent critics. If we do not assume that Shakspeare had read Plautus in the original, the piece cannot (as has been supposed) be a free imitation of the *Menæchmi* of Plautus, for the latter did not appear in an English translation till 1595 (it has been reprinted among the *Six Old Plays*, etc., vol. i.). Probably, however, Shakspeare did not draw his subject-matter direct from Plautus, but followed an earlier play which is lost: *The History of Error*, a court comedy which was given on New Year's Night at Hampton Court, and repeated on Twelfth Night, 1583, at Windsor.—Collier's *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, iii. 62.

guishes the poet's maturer works. The action is represented more from the side of its outward form and direct appearance, but, so to say, only in coloured outlines—light and shade are indicated only by gentle touches—the figures therefore do not stand out with sufficient fulness and clearness, there is still a want of sharpness in the characterisation, of clearness in the grouping, of distinctness in the coherency and in the harmonious connection of the several parts among one another. The frequent occurrence of scenes of quarrel and dispute, occasioned by the perpetual errors and mistakes, reminds one of the original and popular form which comedy assumed, and in which it first met with approbation. Even the striking psychological improbability that the one of the two Menæchmi—Antipholus of Syracuse—should go forth with the express purpose of seeking his lost brother, and that, in spite of all the obvious mistakes of his identity with another exactly like himself, it should never occur to him that he is in the very place where his twin-brother had been cast—might be cited as a proof of the early origin of the piece, were it not so gross, so self-evident that it could not possibly have escaped the notice of young Shakspeare. This improbability is accordingly made a characteristic feature of the piece, and points to a definite intention on the part of the poet. Why, we have to ask, why did Shakspeare intentionally ignore this improbability? Why did he not give the journey of Antipholus to Ephesus some other motive? Perhaps because he did not consider it necessary in mere comedy—where all is intended for pure fun and laughter—to take any heed of things which would only strike and offend mere reflecting reason, and not at all affect the poetical conception; perhaps, however, for another and deeper reason.

If we regard the whole as a whole, as the poetical picture of human doings and actions, the comedy appears to be an amusing satire on man's power of observation and recognition. The accidental resemblance of two pairs of twins, suffices to put almost a whole town into confusion. Life, itself, is conceived, so to say, as a great and many-jointed mistake, encountered by ignorance and blunders in

all possible forms. Hence at the very outset we find the life of the father of the two twin brothers in danger, owing to an ignorance of the Ephesian law—a secondary motive of the action which might otherwise appear a mere superfluous appendage. Hence Adriana's unreasonable jealousy of her husband, which again is but a mistake and gives rise to further mistakes. Hence the perpetually increasing complication, which in time deprives all the dramatic characters of their proper consciousness, and which accordingly is not solved till the two pairs of twins stand face to face, although the possibility of two such pairs of twins being confounded is sufficiently obvious. Under the cloak of the comic we have striking evidence of the, in reality, very serious experience in life, that human knowledge and ignorance dovetail into one another and are mixed up together; that it is very easy for that which we suppose ourselves to know most surely and most distinctly, to turn out erroneous and delusive. The wife mistakes her husband, the master his servant, and the servant his master, the sister-in-law her brother-in-law, the friend his friend, and finally even the father his son. In this way the simplest, most natural and most important fundamental relations of life become a chaotic complication and dispute. We are shown how quickly everything becomes confused and perverted, as soon as one of the laws of life—a perfectly external and apparently unimportant law—is broken by a freak of nature, as soon as but the difference of the outward form—by means of which the perception of the senses distinguishes one individual from another—is destroyed. The psychological improbability, spoken of above, is introduced into this general confusion and complication like an integral part of the whole. I mean to say that the fact of Antipholus of Syracuse being bewildered by the strange things that befall him—his forgetting his own intention, his losing sight of the aim and object of his journey and overlooking just that with which he himself stands in obvious relation—agrees perfectly with the meaning of the play, as well as with the bold and strongly-marked outlines in which the young poet has sketched his picture.

It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that I do

not at all wish to maintain that these more philosophical than poetical considerations—although in my opinion they are not very different—were the directly conscious motives that induced the young poet to choose the subject, and that guided him in its development. But I do believe that his innate appreciation for the beautiful, his fine feeling for unity and harmony, or, in other words, that a genial instinct (it may be unconsciously) compelled him to make the attempt even to outdo Plautus' 'Comedy of Errors,' by introducing a second and exactly similar pair of twins; by this means, as well as by a number of secondary motives, he was able to carry the errors and confusion to the highest possible pitch, and to make them affect all the circumstances and relations of life. It is only by means of this exaggeration that the subject obtains that deeper significance already alluded to, and thereby a central point which gives unity to the confused variety of persons, scenes, relations and incidents, and which holds all the several parts together. Of course, in such a state of things, it could not be devoid of improbabilities, devoid of strange occurrences and wonderful coincidences. But Shakspeare, by the very foundation which he has given to the whole—the romantic history of the family Ægeon, and the distant, foreign locality which he makes the scene of his play—has taken care that common reality is removed from our sight, and has given us to understand that the question here does not concern this world, but a free, poetical creation, the picture of life, so to say, in the mirror of an unbridled fancy. It is only in the mirror of fancy that life could appear so perfectly dependent upon external form and sensuous observation; only within the comic view of life that this conception could be right; only when regarded from the one point of view, from the comic side, that it could appear so. For, true as it is that life is thus dependent, still it is not true that life is *merely* and *wholly* dependent upon sensuous experience; it is not true that human knowledge is *only* sensuous, a perception dependent on the eye and ear. The one-sidedness of the conception, therefore, contains within itself its own corrective; 'error' in the end destroys itself, and a scene of general recognition brings everything into order and

into the right groove. We see that 'error' may indeed, as it were, momentarily take entire hold of life, but must ultimately give way to truth, which eventually not only carries off the victory, but also leads us out of the darkness of delusion and confusion to where we recover the good which had long been missed and sought for in vain.

This is my reason for having placed 'The Comedy of Errors' among the comedies of fancy; I have also called it the *pendant* or companion piece to 'As You Like It,' because I consider that it is not merely fantastic in character, but that it is also internally related to 'As You Like It.' For, as in the latter case, waywardness and caprice, the unreasonableness and inconsistency of *will* and *action* are represented as the dominant principles of life, here it is error, the unreasonableness and inconsistency of *thinking* and *recognition*. The caprice of action is, however, the correlative, the obverse of the error of recognition; both, in fact, exist only in the separation and aberration of the mind from the given reality. Both appear unfounded because they have no objective but merely a subjective basis, and for this very reason both belong to the idea of contingency, inasmuch as the latter, of course, consists only of apparent unreasonableness, of mere want of knowledge, and hence only of an apparent destruction of the necessary and general causal-nexus. Both, however, differ from one another in so far as caprice, as such, is voluntarily independent of external influences, error, on the other hand, involuntarily dependent upon circumstances and relations. For this very reason, in 'As You Like It,' the power of outward contingency is kept in the background, whereas in 'The Comedy of Errors' it is prominently brought forward. This is here at once manifest by the whole plan of the piece, which is founded upon the accidental separation of the father and mother, as well as of the two pairs of twins, by the shipwreck; likewise, all the subsequent complications proceed from the play of chance which reunites the separated family in Ephesus, and perpetually brings the father, the wife, and the servant, the friends and the acquaintances into collision with the wrong Antipholus and the wrong Dromio. The internal,

as well as the external matters of chance belong, however, to the fantastic view of life; they are the essential elements and motives in the fantastic comedy. For both alike undermine reality, which naturally rests upon the necessity of the connection between cause and effect, and disappears in the chequered and irregular play of caprice and fancy.

The circumstance that in 'The Comedy of Errors,' as well as in the two pieces just discussed, we find the characters sketched in but light touches, and not actually developed or fully worked out, is in perfect accordance with the conception of the fantastic comedy. For life cannot be represented in its fantastic freedom at all, unless it clothes the mind and characters of the dramatic personages in the same colouring. A character is fantastic principally by the fact that it lacks determinateness and firmness, as well as steadiness and consistency of development.

3. THE WINTER'S TALE.

Another *pendant* to 'As You Like It' is formed by 'The Winter's Tale.' The subject of this piece must be specially recalled to the reader's mind, as here everything depends upon a clear understanding of the complicated threads of the dramatic texture.

King Leontes of Sicilia, irritated by some trifling imprudencies on the part of his wife, is in a violent state of jealousy with his present guest and friend, King Polixenes of Bohemia. The integrity of a confidant, Camillo, whom Leontes intended to make the instrument of his revenge, enables Polixenes to escape from the designs made upon him. The Queen, however, he causes to be cast into prison, and the little daughter to whom she there gives birth is ordered to be exposed. The oracle declares the Queen to be innocent, and at the same time says that the throne of Sicilia shall be without an heir till the recovery of the exposed child. Simultaneously with this comes the intelligence of the death of the Crown Prince, upon hearing which the Queen falls down in an apparently lifeless state. This concludes the first three acts. The fourth, which opens with a prologue, is supposed to begin sixteen years afterwards. The son of the King of Bohemia

becomes enamoured of the beautiful Princess who has been brought up among shepherds. She had been exposed on the shores of Bohemia, and could not be recovered because those who had carried out the father's orders had perished before their return to Sicilia. The girl, therefore, was generally looked upon as the child of an old shepherd. The King of Bohemia, enraged at his son's attachment to the supposed shepherdess, purposes to compel him to break it off, but the Prince, following the advice of Camillo, and in order to elude his father's violence, flies with his beloved to King Leontes in Sicilia; the latter, in the meantime, has, in deep sorrow and contrition repented of his wrong-doings. Polixenes sends out in pursuit of his son, and by all kinds of strange coincidences, the foster-father of the Princess and his son are also brought to Sicilia. Here the whole affair is cleared up by certain marks being found upon the Princess which were known to have existed on the child that had been exposed. The Queen of Sicilia, also, who had been supposed to be dead, comes forth from her concealment and the play concludes in a tumult of joy and rejoicing. The subject is borrowed from Robert Greene's pastoral romance: 'Pandosto, the Triumph of Time' (1588), which was subsequently altered in various ways and then appeared under the title of 'A Pleasant History of Dorastus and Fawnia.' But Shakspeare, besides making several deviations and additions, has changed Greene's somewhat affected story* (which was merely suited to the taste of his own day) into one of his fairytale-like, fantastic dramas, the propriety of which for the stage may be questioned, but the poetical value of which is undeniable.†

It is easily seen that here, in contrast to 'As You Like It,' the general foundation and plan of the whole—the jealousy of Leontes, the exposure of the infant, the seclu-

* In Greene's tale, Hermione-Bellaria really dies; Leontes-Pandosto falls in love with his own daughter, and is finally seized by a kind of melancholy, in which he kills himself. The characters of Antigonus, Paulina, and Autolycus are entirely wanting.

† Greene's tale in the original will be found in Collier's *Shakspeare's Library*, vol. i., and has been translated into German by Simrock, *Quellen des Shakspeare in Novellen, Märchen und Sagen*, ii. 49 ff.

sion of the Queen and the repentance of her husband, the young Prince's love for the exceedingly beautiful shepherdess, etc.—although unusual, are nevertheless in accordance with reality; the characters, also, are consistently developed, without sudden changes and psychological improbabilities. Individual features, however, are all the more fantastic. We have here the full sway of accident and caprice in the concatenation of events, circumstances and relations; everything is removed from common experience. Not only is Delphos spoken of as an 'island' and Bohemia as a maritime country (local reality, therefore, disregarded), but the reality of time also is completely set aside, inasmuch as the Delphic oracle is made to exist contemporaneously with Russian emperors and the great painter Julio Romano; in fact, the heroic age and the times of chivalry, the ancient customs of mythical religion, and Christianity with its institutions are brought together *sans cérémonie*. It is a matter of accident that the death of the Crown Prince is announced simultaneously with the utterance of the oracle, and that the condition of the Queen appears like actual death. It is purely an accident that the babe is saved at the very moment that the nobleman who exposed it is torn to pieces by a bear, and that his ship, with all on board, is lost, so that no tidings could be carried back to Sicilia. It is mere accident that the young Prince of Bohemia strays into woods and meets the shepherds with whom the Princess is living. In the end similar freaks of chance repair the results of the first accidents, bring all the dramatic personages together in Sicilia, put everything into its proper order, and bring about a happy conclusion. As, therefore, the unreal, the fantastic is here expressed in individual features rather than in the general fundamental relations of the play, so it is also more the interaction of external matters of chance that govern the whole and solve the contradiction of opinions and intentions, of deeds and events; thus, in spite of all the apparent impossibilities, that which is rational and right is ultimately brought about.

It is just this sovereignty of eternal contingency, however, that gives the play the character of a tale and its

title. For pure contingency—in its outward, objective form which, as such, interrupts the order of nature, the given division of time and space, the causal-connection of things, and comes in-between like a foreign element—stands in the closest affinity to the idea of the marvellous. A tale or fairy tale, however, does not, as might be supposed, assume the Wonderful merely as a form or outward dress; the Wonderful is rather an essential element in it, because it is itself essentially based upon the *mystic* view of things, which looks upon life only as the outward form of a deep, unrevealable mystery, to which everything, therefore, appears an inexplicable wonder. Accordingly, that which in common life—in our ignorance of its cause and necessity—we call chance, is made the ruling principle of the tale or fairy tale, and, in order that the principle, as such, may also be clearly and distinctly brought forward, it presents itself in strange, arbitrary and fantastic shapes, in outward forms opposed to common reality. What is fairytale-like in character is, on this very account, a legitimate ingredient in the comic view of life, *but only in the comic view*; a tragic fairy tale would be a poetical monstrosity.* In 'The Winter's Tale,' however, Shakspeare has not opened up the whole region of the marvellous, he has described the wonderful, not so much in its outer form as in its ideal nature and character. In fact, it exists here only in the incomprehensibility of outward contingency and the latter's mysterious connection with the actions and fortunes of the dramatic characters. By thus modifying the idea, Shakspeare has brought the whole nearer to the common reality of life, and enhances the effect by the greater illusion, for in fact a tale gains in poetic beauty when the representation of the marvellous is introduced noiselessly, as if it were the most ordinary of occurrences.

Shakspeare has here again, I think, clearly enough intimated by the title of his play, in what sense he took up and worked upon Greene's romance. He could hardly have intended merely to dramatise a traditional tale; the

* Accordingly the alterations which Shakspeare made in Greene's novel were artistically necessary.

play is not called '*A Winter's Tale*,' but '*The Winter's Tale*.' The poet's intention here was again, as it were, to hold the mirror up to nature, to show the body of the time its pressure. In other words, he wished to show that from a certain point of view life itself appears like a strange, cheerful and yet eerie winter's tale—a tale told to a circle of poetically disposed listeners gathered round the flickering fireside of a peaceful, happy home, on a raw winter's night, by a master in the art of story-telling, while the atmosphere of the warm, secure and happy assembly mixes with the terrors of the adventures narrated, and with the cold, dismal night outside. It becomes this solely by the mysterious veil which envelops the power of chance which is spread over the whole. It is cheerful because through this veil we everywhere get a glimmer of the light of a future which is leading all towards what is good, and because we everywhere feel that the dismal darkness of the present will be cleared off by a necessity which, even though equally dark, is internal. And yet a gentle shudder runs through our frame when we behold the otherwise good and noble Leontes—when excited by trifling circumstances and suddenly seized by a force of passion in the form of a jealousy as blind as it is unreasonable—about to take the life of the deeply-beloved friend of his youth, driving from himself his noble queen, the model of female virtue, exposing his child and branding his honest servant Camillo with the crime of treason;—when we behold how, owing to the mysterious connection in the power of evil, mischief follows close upon the footsteps of sin, threatening the welfare of the whole kingdom; and again, when we behold how accident, as the avenging angel, seizes and destroys even the unwilling tools of crime, and how this complication of crimes even threatens to disturb the peaceful, innocent happiness of the old shepherd and his family.

It is self-evident that when human life appears like a strange winter's tale, the conception cannot and should not be regarded as the plain and absolute truth. Shakspeare's intention was rather to set forward but one side, one element of the whole which is but little taken into consideration. And, in fact, this view of life contains the

profound truth that life does not present itself to man only in its undimmed transparency and perfect clearness, like a bright, cheerful summer's day, but that it is enveloped in a mysterious, irremovable veil, and governed by a power that cannot always be recognised. Shakspeare does not forget to point to the fact that the only means a man has of protecting himself from this dark power, is by strict adherence to the moral law and to the ethical order of the universe, and that, on the other hand, he inevitably falls a prey to it by wandering from the right path, by passion and want of self-control, and thus becomes a playball to the good or bad humours of this power. If, in the present drama, it manifests itself in a good humour, and ultimately brings all back to the right track, this again is but a matter of chance which, in the domain of comedy, is, in fact, represented by the guiding hand of Fate. If it were conceived otherwise, the drama would necessarily have become a tragedy as in the case of 'Othello,' where we have a similar foundation and arrangement.

The play may meet with the objection of being tragical in the first three acts, and comic in the last two. Externally this certainly appears to be the case. But the objection holds good only upon a superficial examination of the piece and when individual features alone are considered. Viewed externally the comic elements—in the narrower sense of the word—are certainly crowded into the last two acts. But every careful reader will feel even in the first three acts that the whole is based upon the comic view of life. This is why the colours used to describe the jealousy of Leontes, the unhappiness of his wife, and the king's repentance and sorrow, are nowhere laid on with glaring thickness, but tempered and given in light touches. Even individual points in the declaration of the oracle, as, in fact, its very introduction into the play, points to a happy issue. Accordingly, the comic scenes at the shepherds' festival in Bohemia, and subsequently those in Sicilia, are most naturally connected with the conclusion of the third act. The contradiction is indeed not wholly removed; this could not be were it only on account of the circumstance that the last two acts

are played sixteen years after the first, in quite new surroundings, under different relations and by different individuals. The division of the piece into two separate parts remains an undeniable defect in the composition. Still, what remains of the contradiction is nevertheless perfectly in keeping with the story-like character of the play and serves to bring this more prominently forward. As in a tale, so here pain and anxiety are directly mingled with fantastic pleasure and grotesque merriment; as in a tale, the distance of time and place disappear in the mysterious haze which envelops the whole; as in a tale, the apparently widely-diverging threads are ultimately wound one into another and form an harmonious design, in which every figure receives its proper place.

All depends upon the view we take of the play: If its story-like character be ignored, and it is regarded from the stand-point of history, which everywhere derives actions and events from given circumstances and relations, from the situations and characters of its *dramatis personæ*, then the play not merely falls into two purely external and loosely connected halves, but the action also—the jealousy of Leontes, the conduct of Polixenes, the rescue and recovery of Perdita, etc.—appears but very insufficiently motived. If, however, the whole drama is conceived in the sense and spirit in which Shakspeare intended it to be understood, and in accordance with which he gave it the name of ‘The Winter’s Tale,’ then it will be found that here, also, the different characters are not only sharply shaded off one against the other, not only are they arranged into distinct, clear and harmonious groups, and described in accordance with the sense of the whole, but they also act in perfect keeping with its spirit and character, and lead the action to its goal.

What lofty dignity, what a noble womanly mind—in contrast to the unkingly and unmanly passionateness of her husband—is exhibited by the wronged queen in her unhappiness as well as in the penance she imposes upon herself and her husband! What fearless, self-sacrificing fidelity shines forth, like a star in the darkness of night, in the characters of Paulina and Camillo! What a fresh

fulness of innate nobility of soul and of inward and outward beauty is revealed in the nature of 'The Lost Princess,' amidst her rude and ill-assorted surroundings! What a correct instinct leads the prince's heart to choose that which the pride and hoary wisdom of his father would have cast aside! What a significant contrast is made by the poor, joyous and peaceful life of the shepherds, as opposed to the brilliant misery of the court! These sharp contrasts not only raise the action above the level of common reality, but also contribute their part to giving the whole the one harmonious impress of the tale or story.

Most commentators have hitherto been agreed in dating the origin of the piece between the years 1610 and 1613, which supposition is certainly supported by its general character and diction. Malone also, who at first decided in favour of 1594 and afterwards for 1604, was subsequently converted, and the opinion of Pope, who regarded the piece as an unsuccessful production of Shakspeare's youth, is founded only upon his own erroneous judgment. It has now been proved by Collier,* through the discovery of Dr. Forman's Diary, that the piece was performed on the 15th of May, 1611; the account-books of the Revels at Court† also, according to which it was played on November 5th, of the same year, at Whitehall, lead us to suppose that about this time it was still a new and favourite piece. And, as even Malone proved, it was first licensed by Sir G. Buck, who did not enter upon the full possession of his office as Master of the Revels till August 1610; thus it is now a matter of certainty that 'The Winter's Tale' must have been brought upon the stage between August 1610, and May 1611. Yet it is just possible that Shakspeare subsequently remodelled an earlier work. A play under the title of 'A Winternyght's Pastime,' is entered at Stationers' Hall as early as 1594. This was perhaps the same play to which Shakspeare may have given a some-

* *New Particulars*, etc., p. 17.

† Cunningham: *Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels*, etc., p. 210.

what different title after having remodelled it. If this supposition be accepted—which is indeed simply an hypothesis—we may perhaps also assume that the earlier work and especially the scenes with the shepherds were left more or less unchanged; this would also explain its fresh colouring as compared with ‘The Tempest,’ ‘Cymbeline’ and ‘Timon of Athens.’

CHAPTER III.

THE TEMPEST AND A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

'THE Winter's Tale,' forms, as it were, the point of transition to a couple of *purely* fantastic comedies, 'The Tempest' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream;' both are internally and externally of the fairy-tale character, both also, as regards subject, are, as it seems, the poet's own invention.* As they are the only two purely fantastic

* Oberon and Titania, and the whole elf tribe who are derived from the old northern religion and legends, had, indeed, been long known to the English, partly from popular superstition, and partly from the old French romance of *Theon and Auberon*. The legend of the love potion is also ancient. Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and his *Tysbe of Babylone*, or Golding's translation of Ovid's *Pyramus and Thisbe* have therefore probably been regarded as the sources of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. (Compare Halliwell: *An Introduction to S.'s Midsummer Night's Dream*. London, 1841, p. xi. f. xxiii. f.) And yet what these sources offered could at most act as suggestions; they in reality do not at all contain the substance and invention of the play. Of *The Tempest* also, most commentators have assumed that the substance was Shakspeare's own invention. And certainly no safe source has yet been discovered from which he might have drawn his materials. For Tieck's conjecture (*Deutsches Theatre*, s. xxii.) that it is remodelled from an old English Play, is a mere conjecture; there is no trace of any such piece, and J. Ayrer's play *Die schöne Sidea*, which exhibits some similarities with *The Tempest*, is no adequate support for Tieck's supposition. Nevertheless it is very doubtful whether Shakspeare did not draw from the old ballad (discovered by Collier), or from an earlier source (common to him and to the author of the ballad, perhaps also of Ayrer, the Nürenberg poet), it may be from an old Spanish novel. It is true that no such novel has yet been discovered, in spite of zealous investigations; but after reading the ballad (in Collier's *Farther Particulars regarding the Life and Works of S.*, and printed herefrom in the *Quarterly Review*, No. cxxx., 1840, p. 478), it must be admitted that the substance in the simpler form in which it is there given, has quite the character of one of those novels of which Shakspeare made such

comedies, and Shakspeare, so to say, first invented the whole species, they have attracted more attention than any others of his comedies, and, accordingly, must here also be submitted to a somewhat closer examination.

Every person of an imaginative or poetical turn of mind, probably knows from his own experience that peculiar state of mind, in which everything appears so strange, so mysterious and mystic that we can become wholly absorbed in the contemplation of a wild flower, of a murmuring brook, or of the hurrying clouds; a mood in which we feel as if, at every moment, something unheard-of must happen, or in which, at least, we long from the depths of our heart for some kind of wonderful occurrence, although in our immediate neighbourhood everything moves on in its usual course, nay although we ourselves feel perfectly content and happy in the everyday relations of our life and in our ordinary activity. There are, in fact, hours in which—illuminated only by single scattered stars—the deep darkness of the

various use, by dramatising them in his own fashion, that is, not only by furnishing them with new characters, and placing these in different circumstances, but also by giving a deeper significance to the ideal substance of the action, as well as to the various characters. At all events, it is inconceivable why the ballad-poet (if he drew from Shakspeare) should have so curtailed the matter, and entirely omitted many significant incidents. Moreover he had no conceivable reason for changing the dramatic personages from Italians into Spaniards, whereas Shakspeare, owing to the political relations between England and Spain in 1610-11, and King James' love of peace, and his endeavours to bring about a good understanding with Spain, might have found pressing occasion to convert the Spaniards of the ballad or novel into Italians. He, however, it may be intentionally, gave them Spanish names, to remind the spectators that the personages were real Spaniards, and that, accordingly, the political allusions interspersed were to be referred to Spain. The fact, that the printing, as well as the diction of the ballad, speak in favour of a somewhat later date than 1610-11, cannot matter much, partly because new editions of ballads thus handed down traditionally, were always changed in accordance with the language and character of the time, partly, also, I think, because even the ballad followed an earlier Spanish novel, and, accordingly, may have been known to Shakspeare from an earlier lost print. As long as this novel remains undiscovered, the question must remain undecided.

Mysterious and the Mystic struggles with the bright daylight of the well-known, for the possession of our soul,—hours, in which the dark, wonder-seeing eye of the imagination confronts the clear, sober look of reason, and man, as it were, beholds himself and the world around him from two entirely opposite points of view, as if he himself were two entirely different individuals. This state of mind forms, we may say, the psychological foundation of that fantastic, poetical picture which—as in the case of Shakspeare's 'Tempest' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'—blends into one, two perfectly heterogeneous and contradictory forms of existence, in order to shape them into a new, strange, half-known, half-unknown world. On the one side we are met by figures with which we are perfectly well acquainted—human faults and failings, feelings, passions and thoughts—all in the usual form of actual reality; we fancy we see ourselves and our surroundings but reflected in the mirror of poetry. On the other side, however, the magic power of the marvellous reveals its whole force, the laws of nature are set aside, the figures represented are at most but the imitations of common reality; their nature, and frequently also their appearance, is wholly different; everything contradicts the experience of every-day life, or at all events, exceeds its limit on either side. And yet we seem, nevertheless, to feel ourselves at home in this abnormal, unknown world of wonders. It is not pure illusion, for it touches a chord in our hearts, which forms an harmonious accompaniment to the mysterious sounds that reach us from that other world; we find ourselves possessed of a mysterious feeling that sympathises with the wonderful beings. The imagination of the true poet, in fact, only throws life into the unexplained wonder which is reflected in the heart of man. The world of wonders into which the poet leads us, does not contradict the laws and customs of common reality, but merely common, external reality; it is in perfect accordance with the higher laws of a reality which is indeed not common, but certainly general and ideal; the physical laws of *nature* are set aside, but they are replaced by the ethical laws of the *mind*. Both are, in fact, one in their origin and aim;

we mentally perceive and feel this unity, and on this very account find ourselves equally at home in both spheres.

Shakspeare's fantastic drama is distinguished from the fairy tale by this double foundation, this double view of life which forms its basis. The fairy tale has but *one* world in which it moves, and this world is wholly wonderful, wholly a play of fancy. The fairy tale does not pretend to describe reality, but envelopes it in that gay, half-dazzling, half-transparent veil of haziness and mustiness, of light and colour, of which its own structure is composed. Its thoughts are but *assonances* of thought, so to say, but separate tones of a rich harmonious chord, the missing notes of which have to be discovered by the reader's own imagination. It does not *intend* to express one definite view of life, one idea, but to allude to the *whole* substance of thought and of life, to touch and to strike it every now and again, so that the bell (which is cast of a combination of all the different metals) gives back the separate sounds, which must harmonise among one another in spite of the looseness of their connection. It is this harmony alone, which, as it were, floats over the whole, that constitutes the general meaning and the truth of the fairy tale, because, in fact, it expresses the one side of real life. The fairy tale, accordingly has no desire to be explained, it does not wish to appeal to the reason but merely to the imagination. To presume to explain it, would be much the same thing as anatomically to dissect a flower to seek for its scent.

Plays like 'The Tempest' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' however, are particularly in need of explanatory criticism, for, on the one hand, they possess the character of the fairy tale, which is apparently quite beyond explanation, but, on the other hand, this fairy-tale character of the representation is merely woven into common reality like a couple of fragrant, exotic flowers into a northern wreath of oak leaves. The Wonderful is so closely blended with the Natural and the Real, that the one cannot become clear if the other is not also explained. To leave the dramas uninterpreted would be to acknowledge them mere tales or fairy tales. But mere fairy tales they are evidently not. For while the fairy tale never expresses

astonishment at what is wonderful—inasmuch as it does not consider it wonderful, but its own peculiar property—in ‘The Tempest’ and ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream,’ the Wonderful appears throughout rather as an actual wonder; the Magical, the Extraordinary and the Supernatural cause as much amazement as they would in our own every-day life. The dramas, therefore, evidently take their standpoint on the ideal boundary where the airy kingdom of the land of wonders and mystery looks into the reality of every-day life, and conversely is looked at by it. They here stand midway in connection with both, with a foot on either side; its centre of gravity, however, lies only on the one side, it rests, in fact, only upon the firm ground of *Reality*. But by the fact of the Wonderful *referring* only to the latter, and appearing interwoven only with actual life, it loses its independence, it exists only *for* reality; only in *connection* with Reality can it have any meaning and significance. And just because the Wonderful does not merely signify what it is itself, but at the same time denotes Reality, pointing to and embracing it, this *double* significance is obviously *symbolical* or *allegorical*. In other words, the Wonderful is and signifies, not merely that which it seems to be, but something else besides, to which it is connected as a part with its whole. The Symbolical, however, by reason of its very nature, requires its significance to be explained; it is no symbol, if that which it denotes cannot also be recognised. In this case also explanatory criticism has not only to examine the unity of the conception upon which the play is founded, but has also to explain why, within this view of life, the Marvellous is so closely connected with the Real, and what is its symbolical significance in this connection.

The different manner in which Shakspeare treats the Wonderful in tragedy and comedy is very remarkable. If we examine the strange forms of the witches in ‘Macbeth,’ and the appearances of the ghosts in the same tragedy or in ‘Hamlet,’ ‘Julius Cæsar,’ etc., we shall find that the symbolical element is there brought prominently forward. It is clear that the witches are introduced to express the idea, that the powers of nature exercise a demoniacal influence over the man who, owing to his passionate ambition,

his pride and lust for dominion, in reality already bears the crime within his own heart; the whistling of the wind will to him speak of murder, the murmuring brook of kingdoms. It is clear that the appearance of the ghost in 'Hamlet' is likewise the ghost of the unnatural crime itself, which creeps about like a spectre, forcing its way through bolts and bars, raising an anxious and uncomfortable feeling in the minds of the inmates of the house, and striving amid pain and anguish to betray itself, and to find its own punishment. In tragedy, however, the symbolical assumes the form of a terrible, even though concealed Reality; its moral significance appears in external, actual objectivity, because the bearer of the tragic pathos is the one distinct side of Reality itself. The ghosts that appear are the ghosts of real, deceased persons; the witches — although half natural, half supernatural, and yet, at the same time, actual human beings — appear raised above the human standard only on account of their unmeasurable wickedness, and the co-operation of higher powers. In comedy, on the other hand, as in 'The Tempest' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' the Marvelous is magical throughout; the elves and spirits have nothing in common with Reality; they belong to a perfectly different, independent species of beings, distinct from the creatures of this world. This, in fact, constitutes the *fantastic* character of these creatures, and for this very reason, their nature is even more symbolical than that of their kindred in tragedy. And this distinction between tragedy and comedy is again a corroboration of Shakspeare's clear perception and fine feeling for the difference of the species, in fact, an actually *fantastic* tragedy such as the Spanish imagination of a Calderon endeavoured to produce, ceases to be truly tragic, the fantastic is appropriate only in the sphere of comedy.

If, in accordance with these preliminary remarks, we look more closely into the Shakspearian idea of comedy in general, and its affinity to the fantastic, it will, in the first place, lead us to discover the general significance of the Wonderful in his comedies. Man, in his folly and perversity, in his selfish arbitrariness and caprice loses the dominion over himself, and thereby over the outer world :

caprice and arbitrariness are, in fact, but the consequences and expression of the want of self-control. Man, thereby, unavoidably falls beneath the sway of accident, and the unaccountable change of outward circumstances; he becomes a slave to a power foreign to himself, which soon he can no longer resist, because from the very first he had no wish to resist it. This power is, in reality, nature and its own natural condition; for in consequence of man's want of a just and true, *i.e.* of an ethical conception of things, and of a moral dominion over himself, he immediately becomes a slave to his natural impulses and passions, to the momentary conditions of his mind, inclinations and desires,* and to his selfish resolves, ideas and fancies. This is no doubt what Shakspeare, in general, intends to intimate symbolically by making elves or spirits like Ariel and his fellows carry on their pranks only with fools or such persons as are decidedly immoral or excited by some violent passion,—whereas they not only spare those that are good and noble in character, but even appear subject to them. This, on the other hand, is the reason why Shakspeare's comic spirits are evidently but the personified powers of *nature*, as will be seen by a closer examination, and shall be proved more definitely in what we have still to say. For the present I shall content myself with drawing attention to the fact that, in consequence of the manner in which Shakspeare conceives and treats the Fantastic, the Wonderful, and what is like a fairy tale in character, the very improbability attached to these—and, therefore, to be avoided as much as possible in a drama—seems almost to vanish, because the spectator does not become clearly conscious of the improbability. Coleridge,* in his remarks on 'The Tempest,' justly maintains that there is a sort of improbability with which we are shocked in dramatic representation not less than in a narrative of real life, because it not only contradicts the latter, but also the *poetical* reality, or *that* reality which we—lost in the region of the imagination, as in a dream—unconsciously grant to the figures of poetry, and which constitutes the so-called illusion. The result of this is that in a simple tale or fairy tale, for instance, the

* *Literary Remains*, ii. 92.

ordinary, natural course of an event would be an improbability. In fact it is not only in nature and history, but also in poetry, that the poetically true is not always probable, and the probable not always true. For the probable is founded entirely upon experience and custom, it is only the effect of pre-supposed causes, *usually* resulting from given circumstances, and, therefore, an effect anticipated by the imagination. The psychological probability will, therefore, in many respects be wholly different under different circumstances, for instance, very different among the negro tribes of Africa, or among Indians and Chinese, from what it is to Englishmen or Germans. Truth alone is eternally the same.

If we bear this in mind, it is self-evident that if the poet can only contrive, from the very beginning, to draw and to keep us within the view of life or within the poetical world in which he places his characters, much, in this world, will appear to us probable that in everyday experience would be utterly improbable. If, therefore, the scene of the poem is placed upon the above described ideal boundary between reality and the land of wonders, if the poet has made the fantastico-comic view of life the foundation of his drama—which, in accordance with its spiritual and ethical character, is perfectly correct although formally in absolute contradiction with reality—then, it only depends upon his describing this region to us from the outset, in the most vivid manner possible, in definite, sharp outlines and in fresh and powerful colours. He will thus have the satisfaction of seeing that all the marvellous things which he presents to us do not in the remotest degree disturb our illusion, in other words, that we find the really improbable perfectly probable.—With what consummate skill Shakspeare has contrived to lay this foundation for the structure of his fantastic dramas, and how powerfully and irresistibly he has contrived to draw our imagination over to his standpoint, will become clearly evident if we recall the subject of 'The Tempest,' and more particularly examine the first scenes somewhat more closely.

1. THE TEMPEST.

This play opens, without a prologue and without all preparation, with the celebrated and excellent representation of a storm at sea, which, owing to its great accuracy and nautical correctness, is worthy of having been penned by a naval captain; this description, according to the opinion of most commentators, gives its name to the piece.

The very first scene contains an unusual occurrence, even though it still lies perfectly within the sphere of common reality. But far more unusual, although still by no means supernatural or unnatural, is the form in which the occurrence is represented. No wailings and lamentations, no cries of deathly terror and despair are heard, as might have been expected, but in the midst of the confusion, danger and distress, there runs an under-current of humour and wit which makes sport with the obvious danger to life and pending death. We, therefore, not only feel that there is nothing very serious in the danger represented—and accordingly are far from being affected by fear and pity, the state of mind which tragedy would call forth—but we are, at the same time, transported into the centre of the comic view of life, which evidently constitutes the basis of the drama. We are challenged to laugh where otherwise we should weep. And yet that which we see is the most ordinary experience, men such as are met with every day, great and small, noble and common, according to the usual standard and cut. This alone is also shown, that the real world of folly, of moral weakness and mischief which we see in every-day experience is, in truth, rather the perverted, unreal side, and that accordingly, when light is thrown upon it, it is frequently most ludicrous where it apparently manifests the greatest misery.

The second scene introduces us to Prospero's cell, where we have the old man, a noble and dignified figure, with his magic mantle and magic wand, accompanied by his daughter of rare beauty and charming girlhood, in the midst of romantic scenery—all this must make upon us the im-

pression of something unusual and strange, and yet still remains within the pale of nature. We have but advanced one step further into the poetical world whither the poet intended to lead us. Prospero then begins his story; with ever-increasing attention we listen to the exceedingly well-told narrative which, it is true, still does not exceed the bounds of real life, and yet, by reason of its extraordinary substance, already verges very closely upon the domain of the wonderful. Even Prospero's frequent questions during his narrative, as to whether Miranda is paying attention and whether she is not asleep, etc., must surely awaken her profoundest interest, and according to her own assurance, actually does; but these very questionings (about which critics have in vain puzzled their brains) are, in my opinion, but an artistic means of increasing the impression of the strangeness which the scene is intended to create, and of introducing Miranda's actual falling asleep, which is subsequently induced by Prospero's magic. We are thus already so far prepared that the appearance of Ariel and Prospero's magic arts—which, moreover, are at first introduced gently and noiselessly—no longer cause astonishment. The poet has succeeded in his object: our imagination is already *in his* poetical world, is unconsciously pervaded by *his* intention, and, accordingly, follows him willingly wherever he chooses to lead us.

The first and second scenes are, at the same time, masterpieces of dramatic exposition. On the one hand, the storm represented draws us at once into the midst of the story of the piece, and excites our interest in the highest degree; we are eager to know what can be the meaning of this strange beginning which introduces to us a number of persons, apparently only to let them perish before our eyes; we are referred to the future and anxiously look for the things that are to come. On the other hand, Prospero's story gives a wide and deep insight into the past. Our imagination, borne on the wings of Shakspeare's dramatic skill in representation, carries us to the distant town of Milan. We not only receive an explanation of the first mysterious scene, but, at the same time, are told the history and get a description of the principal dramatic

personages; the whole action obtains a broad foundation upon the many important deeds and events of the past, from which the action in the following scenes then springs forth like a flower from its native soil. But we have first to become more intimately acquainted with Ariel, this airy figure of the poetical imagination; his vague form which vanishes in air and ether, must first obtain life, definiteness and individuality before our eyes. Hence we hear of his relation to the witch Sycorax, and of his thirst for freedom which leads him into waywardness and ingratitude, and we thereby become acquainted with the chief traits of his characters. The scene between Prospero and Ariel exhibits Shakspeare's marvellous skill—by means of the exposition—of at once setting forth the main features of his various characters in the most brilliant light. Towards the close of the first act we are also personally introduced to Caliban, the strange monster whom Prospero had already mentioned; and thus, when Ferdinand too is brought to Prospero's cell—by means of Ariel's magic chant—and the love between Ferdinand and Miranda is likewise introduced, we are in complete possession of all the motives of the action. All the threads are arranged in so effective a manner that the master's hand can now without difficulty weave them into a graceful plot.

The second act shows us the King of Naples—surrounded by Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo and the two courtiers Adrian and Francisco—in deep grief at the loss of his son whom, at the time of the shipwreck, Ariel had separated from the others, and who, as the King supposes, has met his death in the waves. Antonio and Sebastian form the plan of murdering the King in his sleep, but are thwarted in their design by Prospero's magic arts. Disturbed and dismayed, they all forsake the place, in order to make further investigations concerning the lost Ferdinand. In place of the refined and dignified intrigues of the servants of aristocratic ambition and arrogance, we now have, in an effective contrast, the common coarse fellows, the slaves of plebeian drunkenness and covetousness; in a droll parody, we find that the same creeping plants of evil also grow up among the lowest rabble, only in a

different form, and thus prince and subject are tethered to the same yoke. Trinculo, the jester (as he is called in the list of characters, but evidently the representative of the clown), and Stephano, the drunken butler, accidentally meet Caliban. This scene is dipped in the inexhaustible well of Shakspearian humour; a keen sense of irony, goaded on by its wounded and delicate feeling for what is beautiful and noble, and by its vexation with what is ugly and low, makes game of human weaknesses and perversities, exhibits them in their entire nakedness, and yet, at the same time, treats man himself with affection and sympathy.* The dignity which is exhibited in Stephano and Trinculo as compared with the half-demoniacal, half brute-human hybrid Caliban, possesses something of the sublimely comical and comically sublime; the manner in which the former deport themselves gives evidence of deep moral degradation, it is true, but at the same time we perceive the glimmer of a certain good-nature, a concealed germ of humanity; their behaviour remains invariably human, without any distortion or any admixture of brutality. Even coarseness and immorality lose their depressing weight when they make themselves ridiculous and are coupled with folly and mischief, in other words, when they appear to spring less out of evil intention than from a want of judgment and of mental culture; thus, in place of exciting contempt and indignation, we rather feel a certain amount of interest in their representatives. Stephano and Trinculo are evidently the mimics of Antonio and Sebastian; for, as the latter brood upon

* This is a peculiarity of Shakspearian wit, to which I cannot refrain from drawing attention at this opportunity. Shakspeare is ironical, it is true, and, perhaps, also occasionally satirical, but in so objective and so moderate a manner that his comic figures never become caricatures. He treats them, so to say, with a certain kind of humanity, as if they were his brothers; the real man in his original dignity and majesty we always see peering forth from beneath the cap-and-bells. Even the clowns from the lowest classes, the representatives of the common vices of the rabble, never degenerate in barbarous coarseness and brutality. We can never actually despise them, but feel ourselves in a state of mind similar to that of the poet, and, I might almost say, feel our hearts filled with a similar kind of irony of affection and sympathy.

murder for the sake of princely possessions that are entirely beyond their horizon, so the latter allow a Caliban to pay them divine honour, and take possession of an island of which they as yet know nothing. The parodying tendency is unmistakable; and although the whole scene seems still to be foreign to the complicated plot of the dramatic development, still it not only puts us into the best of humours, but we do not feel ourselves at all offended by the apparent inappropriateness. It also serves to efface the serious and revolting impression—inconsistent with the nature of comedy—which Antonio's and Sebastian's treachery has left upon us, and to prepare us for the lovely sight offered by the first scene of the third act.

Ferdinand and Miranda confess their love while Prospero watches them at some distance. A short space of time has sufficed indissolubly to unite the two hearts which were destined for one another. In fact, love, in the narrower sense of the word, is always the birth of an instant; long acquaintance, mutual esteem and affection, may or may not precede it—this is a matter of indifference to love; it does not grow out of these like a bud from its calyx, acquaintance and affection are, so to say, but the fuel which the flash of love has first to strike before fire and flame are produced. Ferdinand and Miranda form the loveliest companion-piece to Romeo and Juliet, with this difference, that here, in comedy, love has exchanged the tragic cothurnus for the comic soccus. In place of the melancholy, devouring heat of immoderate passion which in 'Romeo and Juliet' tears everything along with it in its headlong course, overcasting the horizon as with a thunder-cloud ready to burst forth into destruction, and bearing within itself the full weight of the tragic pathos, we here also behold the fire of passion, but the passion of two tender obedient hearts, child-like in their gentleness; a passion which, like a mild and yet far-reaching light, clothes all objects in the brightest colours. In the former case all is thunder and lightning, the forked light that shines and illuminates but which also destroys; in the latter, it is the first rays of the morning sun which, in announcing a lovely spring day, looks down timidly and blushing over the mountain top into the valley. And

nevertheless we feel that this delicate germ, which has just begun to shoot forth, possesses a force unequalled by any power on earth. Even Prospero's magic, which has made thunder, lightning, and tempest its tools, and which guides all the other personages like children in leading-strings, has no power here, it cannot even restrain or retard, much less prevent or destroy. It is indeed Prospero's wish that Miranda and Ferdinand shall be united—this wish even forms the point to which all his desires and intentions are directed—but he, at the same time, would like to see their blossoming love keeping exact pace with the maturing of his own plans. For he does not know what will be the effect of the extraordinary occurrences of his magic arts, and of the supposed loss of the king's beloved son, or whether the king will yield and consent to the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda. This is his reason for wishing to control their love; he would like to see the spark ignite, but not to see it burst at once into flame; this is doubtless the principal reason why he at first treats Ferdinand with so much unfriendliness and condemns him to work like a common servant. However, even in the form of a servant, love finds its kindred heart and contrives to ennoble its common state of servitude and its most menial work; unceasingly does the magnet exercise its invisible power, and Prospero is ultimately obliged to consent to that which all the magic in the world could not have prevented.

When conceived from this point of view, the first scene of the third act again stands in a deeply significant contrast to the two following, where Prospero's magic arts display their full power. This power is exhibited first of all playfully and deridingly upon the fools of the piece, upon those who are the slaves to their sensual desires, that is, upon wickedness in the form of stupidity and coarseness, which is not sufficiently great to be treated seriously because it is of itself harmless. I allude to the scene in which Caliban persuades the half-drunken Stephano to rob Prospero of his books and magic instruments, and then to kill him, so that he himself, as king of the island, may obtain possession of the fair Miranda. This scene, which is made an amusing farce by the interference of Ariel, is succeeded by the more serious play of

aristocratic, refined wickedness in the higher spheres. Antonio and Sebastian—as we learn in the following scenes—have not yet relinquished their plan of murdering the King, they are only waiting for a more favourable opportunity. The King's heart also remains untouched and has no remembrance of his wrong-doing. This is why Ariel, in the form of a harpy, enters so suddenly amid thunder and lightning and gives the 'three men of sin' a terrible rebuke, by reminding them of Prospero and their crime. Nay, Prospero's sorcery proves itself so powerful here, that it even produces madness, the three men all quit the scene in a state of mental derangement and are anxiously followed by Gonzalo, Francisco and Adrian. These two scenes again obviously stand in contrast to one another. In the first case the ludicrous plan of the fools for murdering Prospero is only ridiculed and frustrated in quite an external manner, just as they are about to carry it out. In the latter case, the hardened criminals, who are already deep in crime and plotting fresh wickedness, meet with a most severe punishment which touches them to the very quick. The action almost threatens to take a tragic turn, and the last scene would, in fact, leave too deeply affecting an impression, had not the poet taken care to exhibit it so hurriedly and suddenly, and to give the colours, the outlines, light and shade in such light touches, that we can scarcely be said to have witnessed the madness and its horrors. On the other hand, it had to receive a certain degree of emphasis, because it is the climax of the dramatic complication; the knot is tied and all that the two following acts have to do is to unravel it skilfully and happily.

The fourth act, therefore, begins at once with this work. Prospero takes off his mask towards Ferdinand, begs to be forgiven for the trials he put upon him, and with paternal affection places Miranda's hand in his. In celebration of their betrothal, Prospero's spirits give an ingenious masque, in which Juno and Ceres congratulate the young couple. This intermezzo has been considered disturbing, and not altogether unjustly so. In fact, notwithstanding its shortness, it makes a rent in the connection, and suddenly checks the otherwise rapid course

of the action. On the one hand, however, an external circumstance serves to excuse the poet. The 'Tempest' was, as we know from trustworthy authorities, played in the beginning of the year 1613, on the occasion of the festivities in honour of the marriage of the Count Palatine Frederick, with Elizabeth, daughter of King James; and Tieck, therefore, justly conjectures that the masque, here introduced as an episode, may have applied to the princely pair off the stage, rather than to the couple in the play itself; perhaps, however, it was an addition composed specially for the occasion. But, on the other hand, it stands in a closer relation with the motives of the action than at first sight appears to be the case. In the first place, it serves to set forth the true, simple, patriarchal nature of marriage, and to set forth, in the most striking manner, the advantage of its pure and natural shape over the distorted form it has received in the world of excessive civilization. It serves to point out that in life's tempest, a true marriage invariably proves the firm ground for the anchorage of happiness, that it will stand fast when all other things stagger and fall amid life's high-rolling waves. Moreover, Prospero has evidently some personal motive for showing his approved son-in-law the power of his magic arts in their fullest force. It is the one thing with which he, on his desert island, can impress the high-born prince. Lastly, his paternal anxiety also seeks, by the mouth of his spirits, to enjoin chastity and purity upon the young and ardent couple, so that the fruit shall remain untouched till ripe, otherwise, in place of sweetening marriage, it may prove poison to its happiness. The masque is followed directly by the merry chase after Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo. The high cothurnus upon which Juno, Ceres and Iris had walked about, falls again suddenly into the soccus of low comedy. This wavering to and fro between the two extremes is a characteristic feature peculiar to this piece, to which I draw attention, as it essentially belongs to that special view of life which, as I think, is expressed in the play.

When the plot has, in this manner, been unravelled from two points, the fifth act has only to solve the main complication. The unravelling, however, follows as

rapidly and smoothly as was the case with the ravelling. Prospero's magic, which, so to say, tied the knot, is also the means of loosening it; 'heavenly music,' played by his spirits, drives off the madness it had produced. The king, upon recovering self-consciousness, appears deeply affected and filled with genuine contrition. Even Sebastian and Antonio cannot resist the mysterious power which captivates both heart and mind, at least, they remain silent and agree to the arrangements made by Prospero and Alonzo. The King willingly consents to the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda, who when united are to rule over Naples and Milan. Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban are likewise pardoned. And in the end it is also found that the ship had not gone to pieces, but had been preserved by Prospero's magic, and was lying in a bay at the other end of the island. When Prospero, in this manner, has attained all that he desired, and has commissioned Ariel to arrange a favourable journey back, his magic, too, has finished its work; therefore, after giving his obedient servant—who has carried out all his wishes so well—his promised freedom, he casts his magic books and staff into the depths of the sea. All is dissolved in peace and happiness; the tempest has worn itself out, calmness and cheerfulness have returned, and with these the ordinary, regular state of reality, the old sweet, habitual course of existence, such as all desire.

This is the substance of this wonderful, or shall I say strange, poem—this is the story of the piece. Whether Shakspeare drew it from the already-mentioned ballad or from a novel upon which the latter was founded, he has, in accordance with his usual custom, apparently made but few changes. Every change, however, is an essential improvement. In the ballad it remains an unexplained circumstance why Benormo-Antonio did not kill the brother whom he drove from the throne, rather than leave him to wander about the country to excite sympathy and interest, perhaps even rebellion against the usurper. Shakspeare has successfully removed this uncertainty, and at the same time has, by one beautiful touch, brought the amiable character of the old, faithful, and good-natured Gonzalo so clearly before our eyes that we, so to say, see

into his very soul. In Shakspeare, the fact of the King of Naples being made to assist the treacherous brother in the execution of his plan, nay, the very introduction of this royal personage (who is wholly wanting in the ballad), and Ferdinand being made the son and heir of Naples, and not, like Alfonso of the ballad, the son of the usurper—all this serves, in every respect, to give deeper motives for the action and the characters. For in the ballad the repentance of the treacherous, unnatural brother drops in quite suddenly as if it came from the clouds, and its motive is purely lyrical without any further development whatever. In Shakspeare, on the other hand, the conversion of the King, his being able to be appeased and his quick consent to Prospero's wishes, is doubly and trebly founded, first of all by his deep sorrow at the loss of his son whom he supposes drowned, then by the maddening power of Prospero's sorcery, and lastly by the cure of the madness and the recovery of his son. The King's conversion, however, is necessarily followed by Antonio's submissiveness; even though the horrors of insanity had made no sufficient impression upon him, even though he had wished to defy the feeling of helplessness in face of the tested powers of Prospero's magic—still, considering the relation in which he stood to Naples, he *could* not say nay when the King said yea. Moreover, Antonio's behaviour towards the King and his brother, and especially the plotted murder, which is prevented by Ariel's interference, serve to increase the drastic unfolding of the characters. Without this feature, our only means of becoming acquainted with Antonio's way of thinking would be from Prospero's story, from long past deeds and events; he would, in this case, be worth nothing to the drama which is of course principally engaged with the present, with deeds and active thoughts. Even the trifling circumstance that, in Shakspeare, the King's ship is only apparently wrecked and ultimately found lying well equipped for the homeward voyage of the reunited party, whereas in the ballad the Sicilian galleon appears (at the right moment, it is true, but without proper motive) merely in order to help the story to a close, is an improvement which testifies to the well-considered, artistic care with which Shaks-

peare went to work even in regard to the very smallest details.

If the alterations are insignificant, the additions to the given subject are all the more considerable. While, in the ballad the only characters represented are the two royal brothers and their children, Shakspeare proves his superiority by describing more than twelve entirely different personages. He not only makes them speak—as happens in so many of our modern dramas—but he also manages to occupy them. And what is more, every character is a bright spot in the circle in which he directly stands, a light which, as will be seen, reflects the fundamental thought of the whole, the point of view upon which it is based. The groups into which he arranges them for this purpose are disposed almost symmetrically, and in a particularly clear and perspicuous manner. The two royal brothers of Milan are, in the first place, made a contrast to the two royal brothers of Naples. Good old Gonzalo is the mediator between Prospero and his enemies for the past; Ferdinand and Miranda the pledge of the union of present and future. The two unimportant courtiers Adrian and Francisco form the transition from the high spheres of the crowned heads and their belongings to the lower regions of common citizen-life, where we have the ship's master and the boatswain, Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban. Hovering over all these collective groups, we have Ariel and his elves, the airy inhabitants of fairyland. In fact, the arrangement is as harmonious as it is significant.

Accordingly, even though Shakspeare had borrowed the subject elsewhere, we should still have to maintain that the foreign source contained but the bare threads of the events, and moreover only in so far as they apply to the four chief personages; everything else, the forming and the development of every one of the characters, the action—in so far as it describes actual, present resolves and deeds—especially, however, all the relations between the King, Antonio, Sebastian and Gonzalo, the magic charms which influence the dramatic action, and lastly, the comic interlude which Stephano, Trinculo and Gonzalo perform as a companion-parody on the actual drama—all

this is Shakspeare's own invention. Accordingly, it is self-evident that the artistic form, the inner organic unity which harmoniously connects the entirely different species of figures, incidents and spheres of life, are likewise his own property. The question is only, where is this internal point of unity by which alone, as I must again remind the reader, the work of art is a work of art?

It is obvious, at a first glance, that in 'The Tempest' heterogeneous elements are intentionally brought together and placed in contrast. Happiness and unhappiness, virtue and vice, crime and good deeds, sudden wickedness and an equally sudden contrition, the summit of human greatness and dignity together with deep degradation, the highest purity and innocence by the side of almost brutal coarseness and sensuality, tragic seriousness and exuberant laughter, the sovereignty of princes and the state of common servitude, magic and marvels in the midst of every-day reality—in short, the two extremes of humanity seem here bound up together into one knot. We are, accordingly, for a moment in a state of dilemma, and look around for outward help. And, as we have already found that the titles of Shakspeare's comedies, (such as 'The Winter's Tale,' 'As You Like It,' 'Twelfth Night,') in spite of their strangeness, have nevertheless not been chosen without some intention and significance, our eye involuntary turns to the heading of this piece; we presume that, in this case also, the title of 'The Tempest' must stand in some kind of internal connection with the ideal substance of the play. We are confirmed in our supposition when we see that—as already intimated—the drama throughout exhibits a peculiar hurry and flurry, a rising and falling between the utmost extremes, not only as regards events, fortunes and situations, but also as regards the characters and their arrangement; and this internal restlessness affects the reader or spectator as well as the personages of the play. Elements so heterogeneous and so absolutely contradictory as we have them here, must, when encountering one another, inevitably produce a violent state of agitation. At the very commencement, therefore, we have life and death engaged in conflict with each other; the crew of the

stranded ship, apparently on the point of meeting an unavoidable death, are indeed saved, but some, at least, are led into new struggles and perplexities. Prospero's conversation with Miranda, where he narrates the story of his fortunes, receives a restless form, corresponding with its substance, from those perpetual questions of which we have already spoken; but it, at the same time, is a proof of the deep inward emotion in Prospero's own mind. The real action begins immediately upon Ariel's appearance; he is evidently the fly-wheel which, urged on by a higher power, puts the whole machinery in motion. And yet Ariel himself is excited and affected by a burning thirst for freedom; he grumbles at the state of servitude to which he has been half-compelled to submit and has half voluntarily (out of gratitude) taken upon himself, but after a warning from Prospero, endures it with patience and dutiful obedience. Thus, he forms a contrast to the diabolical and brutal Caliban, whom wickedness, hatred and animal savageness provoke to rebel against Prospero, and whose cursing spirit is forced to wander about without rest. Then under Ariel's direction the shipwrecked persons are thrown into the same state of internal and external agitation. Ferdinand, who, upon seeing Miranda forgets all his sufferings, is cast out of the heaven of his bliss by Prospero, and degraded into a common servant. Alonzo, who is oppressed with grief at the loss of his son and wanders about the island in search of him, suddenly falls into a deep sleep; Antonio and Sebastian who are spurred by their ambitious designs, find them thwarted at the very moment when they are to be carried into effect; all three, just when they are a little at ease, and about to refresh themselves with the enjoyment of a repast, fall into a kind of madness and fly off from one another in terror. It is much the same with the comic heroes of the drama, the prince of drunkenness Stephano and his subjects; they are perpetually made uneasy, teased and tormented, and stroll about the island, which, with its bogs and morasses, is the equally insecure scene of all this inquietude. They, in place of acquiring sovereignty by the intended murder, only act as common thieves, and in place of rising to be princes

and lords are more like the animals of the forest, hunted by dogs; however they are finally pardoned, and put back into their respective places. In the same way the princes and lords also get safely out of their deep misery and perplexity, and on to the right track; they recover not only their consciousness, but son and daughter, as well as ship and kingdom. The end is as surprising to them all as was the beginning and the middle; it is only at the close of the play, on the return home, that quiet and peace are fully restored. And all this abundance of incidents and events, as the poet expressly states, is played out with hurrying rapidity in the short space of four hours!

The drama has been censured for being devoid of real action. And the action certainly does consist almost entirely of *inward* hurry and pressure; outwardly it is generally expressed only in resolves and plans which come to a stand-still when but half accomplished, and lead to entirely opposite results. Prospero's wishes alone are realized. And yet these very thwartings, this fruitless striving and struggling, might be regarded as fully corresponding with the poet's intention. At least, when we perceive this constant surging, when we find that the characters also not only represent the most extreme contrasts, but that all are tossed hither and thither by the most abrupt change of outward good or bad fortune, as well as by the states of their own minds, and lastly, when we see that the diction too—in the change from the sublime to the comic, from the comic to the serious—manifests the same rise and fall,* we cannot well doubt that this restless motion of the inner and outer life was *intentional* on the part of the poet, and a result of the depth of his fundamental view of life.

In fact there are, perhaps, in the life of everyone, days and hours in which we cannot succeed in anything, in which we seem driven about by some invisible demon, and strive

* I will only draw attention to the celebrated passage in act iv. 1, "*these our actors are melted into air*," etc.; there is, in all of Shakspeare's works, scarcely any passage more sublime than this. Ariel's rebuke to the three royal sinners (iv. 3) is likewise written in the grandest style, and forms a most striking contrast to the jokes of Stephano and Trinculo.

and struggle without attaining our object, in which we waver and hesitate between conflicting impulses, tendencies and purposes, in which we apparently lose ourselves in some internal and external contradiction, until at last we suddenly and unexpectedly find ourselves in our right place. This strange hurry and worry does not merely depend upon the play of accident, or upon the change of external circumstances and relations; contingencies rather form but the one side; these correspond, on the other, with an internal ferment of the mind, a budding and sprouting of new resolves and half unconscious wishes, hopes and fears, a restless state of the whole soul. Both sides act in correlation with one another, the one being but the echo of the other. Such times are generally the days of those secret throes of birth where the inmost depths of life struggle to come forth in a new form, and where the old matter begins to drop off chaotically, but is gathered together again by hidden forces and formed into new structures. We are no doubt conscious of this struggle of coming into being, this restlessness and pressure, but we are not aware from whence it comes and whither it tends. It is only when our minds are again at rest, and we look back upon what has come to be, that we recognise the various motives and forces which called it forth. In history, these days are those dark, incomprehensible times in which men, without knowing why, feel themselves restless and uncomfortable; times of ferment, when the old edifice is tottering and threatening to fall in, and there is as yet no material for the construction of a new one; periods of transition in which the ship of history is driven on by some invisible power, apparently without rudder or compass, in which are formed those new tendencies, new motives of development, the embryos of creative ideas, that are hidden from the eyes of the present, and in which are sown the seeds of a rich and significant future; times which of necessity are somewhat obscure and mysterious and in which therefore we find the rank weeds of mysticism, the love of the marvellous and superstition shoot forth by the side of the ordinary business of life and by the side of the current interests of every-day life. In short, there are times—as

when the tempest agitates the sea and we know not whence it comes or whither it goes—in which the mysterious powers, which direct our fate and shake the old rotten pillars of life, impregnate the fruitful womb of history and stir up all existence to its very foundation; and the most distant and heterogeneous substances are brought into collision; and together with the new forms which are thus struggling for birth, old and even mystic shapes rise up again, half-forgotten dreams become reality, and that which was apparently dead rises up into fresh life.

I mean to say that the poet who wrote 'The Tempest' has conceived life and history from that side which is especially prominent in such restless times, but which belongs as much to the usual and general state of human existence. He represents life as agitated by a *tempest*—agitated by heterogeneous and conflicting elements, which have come into collision, seemingly by accident—agitated by its own sap and forces, which have been put into a state of ferment—agitated by the mysterious power which men call chance or fortune, but which, in fact, is the magic power of fate, that is, by the spirit of the creative forces of nature and history which are subservient to the great historical minds, to the geniuses of humanity, in order that by their help they may be the means of paving the way for the progress of life and history, and so accomplish the Will of Providence.

If we assume that it was this special view of life which Shakspeare meant to describe in 'The Tempest,' it not only explains the title of the drama but also the characterisation, the substance and the course of the action, but more particularly the nature of the magic and the marvellous which here everywhere exert their influence. It explains why all the characters, with the exception of Prospero, are not so much the bearers of their own existence, as rather borne by it, driven on by the tempest which unconsciously gathers round them, determining their fate and guiding their actions, the effects of which tempest they no doubt perceive, and its nature is not revealed to them, till all that was to be has actually come to pass; the misfortunes which befell them, the marvels that terrified them, they regard as strange matters

of chance, as freaks of nature, peculiarities of the island and of its inhabitants. In truth, however, it is Prospero's magic arts which effect everything, Prospero's spirits which in reality control and shape earthly existence, inasmuch as they are the embodiment of the stirrings and movements of the secret psychical life of nature, so to say, the souls of plants, of stones and metals, of winds and clouds, the small yet powerful spirits which Prospero so beautifully describes, when in act v. 1, he exclaims:

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves;
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him,
When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green-sour ringlets make
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you, whose pastime
Is to make midnight-mushrooms; that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid
(Weak masters though ye be) I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt.

From this description it is clearly evident that the very introduction of the elves and magic is but a fantastico-symbolical form given to the mysterious powers which prevail in *nature* and which so significantly influence human life. But these spirits, at the same time, boast of being the 'ministers of fate' who have 'to instrument this lower world and what is in 't.' And, in fact, the mysterious powers of nature—when the stream of life hurries onwards as when agitated by a tempest—are mighty instruments in the hand of fate; failure of the crops, famine, epidemics and pestilence can in such times become the levers of far-reaching revolutions, of wasting wars, of horrible cruelties; an unusually severe winter may occasion the downfall of an empire. In fact, Prospero's spirits are the personified resolves of fate, which not only direct the course of natural events, but also influence those wonderful coincidences which, in the superficial language of common-sense, are called accident or fortune. According to the usual view of things, the storm

which drives the King's ship on to Prospero's island, and thus proves the means of the latter's return and his reinstatement, would be called an accident; but here the storm appears raised intentionally in order to serve definite purposes. Prospero's previous rescue would usually be accounted an accident, here it is described as a wonder. The King awakening at the moment when his life is threatened by Sebastian and Antonio, would generally be considered a special piece of good luck; here it is Ariel, who rouses the sleepers and frustrates the criminal design. Even the sudden madness and the equally sudden conversion of the three 'men of sin' would, at most, be regarded as a remarkable psychological phenomenon induced by peculiar circumstances, whereas it is here the work of Prospero and his spirits. Lastly, the mistakes and perplexities into which Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban fall, would usually be given out to be the mere bantering play of accident in league with their own folly, drunkenness and coarse desires, whereas here it is Ariel who makes them the play-balls of his whims, and thus thwarts their foolish intentions.

And yet the mysterious powers which direct the course of the action, which thwart and confound the designs of the fools and the wicked, do not, as already said, possess any control, or at least, only an external power over Ferdinand and Miranda. Gonzalo also is spared by them. For it is only on account of the disturbing power of evil that these agitated times are full of dark turmoils and wild restlessness. Without it the life of the individual as well as the history of humanity would indeed be agitated, nay, perhaps might flow along in a more rapidly advancing movement, but the movement would never assume the form of restlessness, of surging and heaving, of uncomfortable hurry and confusion. This is called forth only by the struggle between good and evil. This struggle, therefore, forms the centre of the action in the present drama. Prospero is, so to say, the personification of the power of good; he here represents the place of one of the great spirits, one of the geniuses of humanity who are entrusted with the guidance of history. Accordingly, he is master of the elements of

nature, master of those wonderful coincidences of apparently unimportant accidents and natural events, which are nevertheless often followed by the most serious consequences; he is master of the small, weak little spirits which are nevertheless capable of darkening the light of the sun and of shaking the earth to its very foundations. At the same time we have the significant intimation that, after all, it is only the power of *thought*, of understanding and knowledge, directed by *ethical* motives, which, in the first instance produces the new forms of individual life, in fact, precisely as the great evolutions of history are brought about; Prospero's profound studies are the sole means by which he has risen to the height from which he now has control over the fate of his powerful adversaries.

Opposed to him, and at the extreme limit of the contrast, stands Caliban, the climax of wickedness and brutality, the very personification of the evil Will. He is only momentarily tamed by outward constraint and inward powerlessness; his will remains evil, and in him we have a proof of the irrefutable truth that evil, even though, by its own acts, it invariably annihilates itself and serves the purposes of what is good, still evil as Will cannot become converted either by any affliction or punishment, or by the clearest conviction of its helplessness. This seems to me to be the meaning, the poetical, because ethical, significance of this most strange of all the creatures ever formed by the poetical imagination—a creature in whom devil, animal and man, are equally blended, and who, in spite of his wholly fantastic abnormality, rises up before us with the vividness of actual reality. Caliban is no mere creation of a passing poetic fancy, no chance addition to the substance of the drama; for although he may have originated in Shakspeare's imagination from the fantastic and wondrous reports about the wild inhabitants (the cannibals) of the newly discovered continents, and although grotesquely formed and humorously exaggerated—so as to suit the fantastico-comic colouring of the whole—still he is a necessary member in the artistic organism of the piece. And as Prospero's mind is evidently one of more than ordinary endowments, and, like every historical

leader of men, represents the higher idea of what is general, so Caliban, his organic opposite, is likewise no mere individual, but also the representative of what is general, the personified idea of human wickedness; in him, in his defiance and arrogance and his blind, coarse sensuality, the demoniacal meets the brutal. Of a kindred mind are Stephano and Trinculo, the representatives of folly and perversity, and of the want of mental and moral culture. In the case of the latter, the evil does not consist in the evil Will but in the unconsciousness and indeliberateness with which they indulge their natural desires. In this they differ from the deliberate and conscious wretches, Antonio and Sebastian, in regard to whom the poet leaves it undecided whether they are ultimately converted, or whether they persist in their evil ways. They thus form the transition to the indeed morally polluted, but in itself nobler and merely misguided, character of the King, who is in the end purified from sin by his sincere repentance. Miranda and Ferdinand, and honest old Gonzalo, on the other hand, follow the power of the good and join Prospero. Between them we have those that are indifferent, lukewarm, neither black nor white, but who turn about, like weather-cocks, as the wind happens to be blowing; these are the courtiers Adrian and Francisco. They are the dummies, and represent that large indifferent class, which seems to exist only in order to fill up the gaps between good and evil, so that no space is left unoccupied on the stage of history. Thus all the characters are arranged into harmonious groups between the great contrasts which run through the whole drama.

For not only do the characters of the persons represented, but the action itself—which certainly stands in the most active correlation with the characters—appear conditioned and determined by the same contrast, by the same fundamental motive. The action, as already said, consists less in deeds than in the above-described restless ferment of the mind which gives rise to strivings, plans and resolves, but these, when scarcely formed, dissolve into nothing or fall back as sufferings and punishments upon the heads of their representatives. The whole machinery is more concerned about repairing matters of the past, than about an inde-

pendent present state of action. The dramatic development is based upon events of remote times; out of these have been formed relations and conditions belonging to a definite state of life, the transformation of which is the question of the present. The action, accordingly, is to a certain extent of a negative character, and bears the impress of a mere transition period; its motives belong to the past, their positive construction and restoration falls to the future, or at all events we see them only in prospect. This, however, is exceedingly characteristic of the view of life which forms the basis of the whole drama; for the troubled, restless state of ferment—in which human life resembles nature when its elements are in a state of agitation—can be founded only upon conditions and events which are apparently long since dead and buried, but which, like fire, smoulder below the ashes, and only wait for some combustible matter, to flare up anew into living flames. The necessity which such a past bears within itself of actually living itself out, can be accomplished only by old deeds and sufferings being again stirred up and annulled in the effects which they have produced. The condition which they had called forth was only provisional, and this very provisional state hurries on to destroy itself, and thus creates the above described internal heaving and surging. A new formation of things seeks to obtain breathing space, the old crime perpetually demands expiation, the morbid-matter of the past wanders about uneasily in the living body of the present, till it finds its way out somewhere. The moment of this bursting forth is that point of time where our drama commences its development; for the whole action turns, in fact, only upon Prospero's enemies being punished, and upon their being brought, by contrition and repentance, to make amends for their wrong-doings. In such times, however, the so-called accidents, the unforeseen natural events, their wonderful coincidence with the undertakings of men, in short, all the means in the guiding hand of fate, are particularly powerful and active; in other words, Prospero's *spirits* are chiefly the main-spring of the dramatic development. In such times, however, even the inner and free resolves of men appear much more independent of external circumstances, of the whisperings of

opportunity and accident. For in times of such external and internal commotion, the mind loses its mental support, the wish of the agitated soul becomes more ardent, the desire more eager, the passion more violent, and thus a gentle hint from without suffices to urge these on to plans and resolves.

This point of view first gives us an explanation of Ariel's strange conduct of intentionally causing the King, old Gonzalo, and the two courtiers, to fall asleep, as if wishing to give Antonio and Sebastian an express opportunity of carrying out their design upon the King's life. We now first understand why he favoured Stephano's rescue on the wine-cask, and what was his object, by means of a thunder-storm, in making him encounter Trinculo and Caliban—why, in fact, Ariel, from beginning to end, is the means of preparing, starting and carrying out the action. He represents the favourable opportunity, the fortunate or unfortunate coincidences by means of which the tempest of life, the resolves of men, are called forth. But we now also understand how it is that the doings of the other characters in all cases come to nothing, and that Prospero's intentions alone are accomplished. For, as soon as the struggle of Good against Evil assumes a specific and general character—as in the present case—the Good alone can come off victorious. And according to Shakspeare's ethical view of life, the final issue of all human complications can only result in the triumph of what is right and moral, presupposing, of course, that the right is not at the same time half a wrong, but that, as in the present case, it stands entirely and completely on the one side. The same powers, therefore, which give outward opportunity for despicable undertakings, also prove the means of frustrating them; they clear up the troubled state of ferment, and bring the confused times into a state of order. The close of the play must necessarily become happy for all parties; Prospero breaks his magic staff, the weird power of sorcery ceases to prevail, because the reason of its strength, the heaving ferment of the elements of existence, is at an end; a bright future spreads out its beneficent arms and embraces all those who anxiously long for order and peace.

If we examine the details somewhat more closely it will be found that the strangest incident in the play is the outburst of madness that befalls the three 'men of sin,' and threatens to destroy the comic character of the piece, but yet it forms the climax of the complication. Our standpoint, however, can be found even to explain the introduction of the madness, which, as I think, is much less forced than many other incidents. For, as under the presupposed forms of life, mysticism, the love of the marvellous and superstition are always found in full bloom, such times are also most frequently found associated with madness, inasmuch as this state is but an increase in the already existing mental disturbance. It would be a simple matter to give historical proofs of the fact that such times invariably produce the greatest amount of mental diseases, and that every such period possesses its peculiar species of insanity in accordance with the character of the age. Antonio, Alonso, and Sebastian are, moreover, those very persons who, by their actions, had occasioned the tempest; their minds, accordingly, had also to be most powerfully affected by the troubled state of affairs. The derangement of their minds indicates but the highest pitch of the general disturbance, and hence, also, the turning point, the transition to the final reconciliation and pacification. The fact of 'heavenly music,' *i.e.* pure ideal harmony, being employed as a mental cure, most clearly exhibits the poet's intention; the madness appears to be but the extreme point of the confusion, the last dissonance which is resolved into consonance by the power of that harmony which pervades the whole.

What I have called the ideal point of unity, the fundamental motive, the leading thought of the piece, is expressed by old Gonzalo—not indeed in the form of reflecting thought, but still as a simple statement—when at the close he says:

Set it down

With gold on lasting pillars: In one voyage
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis;
And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife
Where he himself was lost; Prospero, his dukedom,
In a poor isle; *and all of us, ourselves,*
When no man was his own.

Indeed the very fact of all the characters losing and recovering not only their outward fortune but their *own selves*, forms the actual substance of the drama. This utterance is the strongest proof of the effect which a general state of excitement and stormy commotion in life must exercise upon individuals. But in reality, our life is perpetually threatened by this influence; the storms, at times, place it in a violent state of agitation perceptible to everyone, they do not arise from without but from within, from internal discord, from the perennial struggle between good and evil. And life itself is, in fact, but like a passing wave in the surging ocean of time, set in motion by some higher mysterious power. This thought which must arise in the mind of every thoughtful reader, when viewing the course of the action, is emphatically expressed by Prospero when, in the celebrated lines that adorn Shakspeare's monument in Westminster Abbey, he says:

Like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind: we are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

Rack signifies much the same thing as gossimer cloud, a light, flakey little cloud, the so-called wind-clouds or *cirrus* of modern science which are drifted across the sky by the wind. The meaning, accordingly, is that our life with all its glittering splendour will disappear as if swept off by a *tempest*, not a *rack* being left; for life resembles the feathery clouds that arise from vapours and damp, and are carried along by the wind; it is woven out of the same perishable material as that of which our dreams are composed, a solitary, bright spot encompassed by the darkness of uncertainty and unconsciousness, by a deep terrestrial sleep which holds all earthly existence within its embrace. This is why *Ariel*, the airy spirit, is described as the pulse of the action, and that, from

beginning to end, it is directed by him. This is why everything appears in so restless and unsettled a motion, why events appear as rapidly as they vanish—in short, why the drama is pervaded by that wondrous hurry which flits past our soul like a fleeting vision.

In spite of these indications which are given by the poet himself, I do not mean to maintain that Shakspeare was, from the commencement, perfectly conscious of this fundamental view of life, or that he worked it into the subject. It is quite possible that he, in the first place, may have taken up the subject merely because it interested him and excited his imagination, or because he perceived its dramatic applicability. He may have introduced the tempest and placed the scene on a desert island, because S. Jourdan's account of the violent storm which, in 1609, swept down upon the fleet under the command of Sir George Sommers, and drove the Admiral's ship upon an uninhabited island (one of the Bermudas or Isles of Devils), may have greatly attracted him. But in weaving these heterogeneous elements—the storm, the Isle of Devils, and the story of Prospero—into a dramatic whole, he was instinctively led by his sense of beauty, by his artistic feeling for unity and harmony, to that point where the multifarious threads meet harmoniously, and where he himself found the relations which could form the subject into a poetical picture of human life, and give it a general significance. To express the general significance in a general form, in the form of a general view of life, of a poetical idea, is not the business of the poet, but of the æsthetic critic.

2. A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

'A Midsummer Night's Dream' takes us to a different and yet to the kindred sphere of the fantastico-comic view of life. 'The Tempest' shows us the substance of this view, in a form peculiar to a man in his maturity or verging upon old age, 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream,' on the other hand, presents it to us in an aspect such as is natural to the exuberance of youth or to the fresh and free man who has just entered manhood in the full bloom of his strength and activity. In the former case we are

conscious of a glimmering of deep seriousness lying at the foundation of the whole and shining through every line of the merry play; the poem although gliding past our view like a vision, possesses nevertheless an inward and deeper gravity, and the comic parts even excite such a number of suggestive thoughts that our laughter involuntarily changes into a thoughtful smile. In the present case, on the other hand, all is fun and frolic, waywardness and caprice; the poem, so to say, is like a merry wanton child which, in a short and loosely flowing dress, skips along lightly amid the dance of its companions, its foot scarcely touching the ground; playfully it runs out into the haziness of the green forest-glade, playfully it loses itself there, and we hear but the merry peal of mischievous laughter resounding from all corners of the forest long after the child itself has disappeared.

At a first glance we are almost more puzzled here than in the case of 'The Tempest' as to what—from an æsthetic point of view—to make of the strange airy creatures which are presented to us in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.' There is here such a wanton play of fancy and merriment, such a gay succession of pranks, that upon a first impression we might be inclined to deny that the piece possesses any deeper significance, any rational meaning. Theseus, the old ancestral hero of the Athenians, and the Amazon Queen Hippolyta, are on the point of celebrating their wedding, and through the entire play, in fact, do nothing but talk of marriage and marrying. Further, we have two other loving couples, young noble Athenian youths and maidens, whose union is hindered by an ill-tempered old father and also by their own self-will; they commence an intrigue which, however, comes to a standstill when only half accomplished, so that this also cannot be regarded as the centre of the whole. Then, we have Oberon and Titania, who are likewise in ill-humour and at jealous bickerings; and again, the pranks of the whole airy elf-tribe whose bantering play thwarts the plans and resolves of the mortals. Lastly, we have crowded into the piece a company of amateur players, persons from the lower orders, who, with the utmost senselessness and the most foolish ideas, rehearse and exhibit

a play which seems to have as little connection with the whole, as the other parts among one another. In face of these not merely perfectly heterogeneous elements, but elements that are apparently strung together without either order or arrangement, it seems a hopeless undertaking to answer the question, as to what is the centre and gravitating point upon which the drama here turns, and in how far—in accordance with the first requisite of art—does it form a living, harmonious whole.

In the first place it is self-evident that the play is based upon the comic view of life, that is to say upon Shakspeare's idea of comedy. This is here expressed without reserve and in the clearest manner possible, in so far as it is not only in particular cases that the maddest freaks of accident come into conflict with human capriciousness, folly and perversity, thus thwarting one another in turn, but that the principal spheres of life are made mutually to parody one another in mirthful irony. This last feature distinguishes 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' from other comedies. Theseus and Hippolyta appear obviously to represent the grand, heroic, historical side of human nature. In place, however, of maintaining their greatness, power and dignity, it is exhibited rather as spent in the common every-day occurrence of a marriage, which can claim no greater significance than it possesses for ordinary mortals; their heroic greatness parodies itself, inasmuch as it appears to exist for no other purpose than to be married in a suitable fashion. The band of mechanics—the carpenter, joiner, weaver, bellows-mender and tinker—in contrast to the above higher regions of existence, represent the lowest sphere in the full prose of every-day life. But even they—in place of remaining in their own sphere and station, where they are fully justified, and even somewhat poetical—force themselves up into the domain of the tragic muse, wishing not only to appear more poetical, but to make poetry, and accordingly not merely exhibit themselves in an exceedingly ludicrous light, but, are, as it were, a parody on themselves as well as on the higher sphere of the tragic and the heroic. Midway between these two extremes stand the two loving couples, who belong to the middle stratum of human society.

But in place of endeavouring to regard life from its inner and central point—in accordance with their position—they also lose themselves in the fantastic play of their own selfish love, and thus they too are a parody on themselves and their station in life. Lastly the king and queen of the fairies and their interference in the action appears to represent that higher power which guides the life of men by invisible threads. But even this over-ruling power is not depicted in its true grandeur, in its highly important significance, and quiet mysterious activity; but, like all the other parts of the piece, is also carried along in the general whirl of humour. It is represented in palpable, bodily forms, and exhibits itself only as the merry bantering play of the personified powers of nature, that is, it parodies itself in so far as it too appears subject to the caprice of accident and to its own waywardness; this is clearly evident in Titania's passion for the ass-headed Bottom.

The theme which the action carries out in the spirit of the fantastico-comic view of life is, as A. Schöll proves more in detail in his ingenious treatise* on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' the *illusion* into which men are thrown by *love*, the *poetry* of life, which here holds captive the senses of the dramatic personages as if by some irresistible charm. It is the magic power of love which has caused the bloody feud between Theseus and the Amazon queen to resolve itself into a gay wedding feast. Titania has fallen in love with an Indian boy, whom Oberon, in a fit of jealousy, demands her to give up, so that he may make the boy one of his huntsmen: and this again gives rise to the bantering play of the elves among one another. Egeus, the father of Hermia, has taken a blind preference for Demetrius, which is his only reason for refusing his daughter's hand to Lysander, and he wishes to compel her against her will to marry Demetrius. The latter, who was originally devoted to the faithful Helena, suddenly becomes passionately enamoured of Hermia, who has an aversion to him. Lastly, the play of the mechanics, in which they themselves are wholly engrossed, turns upon the tragic loves

* *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 1844.

of Pyramus and Thisbe; moreover Bottom, the leader of the company, is unawares thrown into an amorous relation with Titania. The complication among the different pairs of lovers (with the exception of Theseus and Hippolyta) threatens to become serious:—Oberon's and Titania's quarrel has already occasioned much mischief, and, as Titania herself expressly says, may even lead to more;—Hermia, in case of her abiding by her refusal, is threatened with death or doomed to pass her life in a nunnery;—Helena is in despair about the infidelity of Demetrius, and the latter about Hermia's cruelty. But the purport of the piece is not to give a comic representation of love—this is not the actual theme of the poem. On the contrary, the action exhibits the serious side of the passion of love only so as to parody this seriousness by representing love itself as a mere plaything, a mere *illusion*; in short, the action in reality parodies itself. This is why love here does not appear as an *inward* fascination of the heart, proceeding from the imagination or from the force of the involuntarily changing disposition of the lovers, but that it, at the same time, appears subject to the *outward* magic interference of higher beings, who carry on their bantering play with them. Oberon's magic herbs cause Lysander and Demetrius suddenly to become madly in love with Helena, and Titania to dote upon Bottom; but the spell is as rapidly dissolved and the right relation restored. The acting mechanics are therefore not without reason woven into the adventures of the magic forest. For, on the one hand, their burlesque comedy is intended to remind us that the seriousness of these adventures is, after all, not meant to be so very serious, and, on the other hand, the representation of Pyramus and Thisbe draws the tragic pathos of love down to the level of the ludicrous, and thereby, at the same time, parodies the apparently tragic significance of love which is depicted in the piece itself. Hence A. Schöll very justly remarks, that, 'When Demetrius and Lysander make fun of the candour with which these true-hearted *dilettanti* cast aside their masks during their performance, we cannot avoid recalling to mind that they themselves had shortly before, in the

wood, no less quickly fallen out of their own parts. When these gentlemen consider Pyramus a bad lover, they forget that they had previously been no better themselves; they had then declaimed about love as unreasonably as here Pyramus and Thisbe. Like the latter, they were separated from their happiness by a wall which was no wall but a delusion, they drew daggers which were as harmless as those of Pyramus, and were, in spite of all their efforts, no better than the mechanics, that is to say, they were the means of making others laugh, the elves and ourselves. Nay, Puck makes the maddest game of these good citizens, for Bottom is more comfortable in the enchanted wood than they. The merry Puck has, indeed, by a mad prank had his laugh over the awkward workmen and the lovely fairy queen, but in deceiving the foolish mortals has at the same time deceived himself. For although he, the elf, has driven Lysander and Demetrius and the terrified mechanics about the wood, the elves have, in turn, been unceremoniously sent hither and thither to do the errands of Bottom, the ruling favourite of Titania; Bottom had wit enough to chaff the small Masters Cobwed, Peasblossom and Mustard-seed, as much as Puck had chaffed him and his fellows. Thus no party can accuse the other of anything, and in the end we do not know whether the mortals have been dreaming of elves, the elves of mortals, or we ourselves of both.' In fact, the whole play is a bantering game, in which all parties are quizzed in turn, and which, at the same time, makes game of the audience as well.

In the first place this tendency of one part parodying the other, and the identity of the theme—which the action carries out with an equal tendency to parody in a variety of ways—brings all the different groups of the dramatic characters into close community, inasmuch as all appear to be animated by the same spirit. The play of the mechanics ridicules, in the gayest manner, not only the contents of the piece itself, but all dramatic art as well; in the end, however, the piece which parodies everything and is again a parody on itself, carries this tendency to a climax, and is thus the means of rounding off the whole, by, as it were, giving the drama its point. Further, there

is no want of external connection between the several parts of the action, which connection is certainly slight and loose but has been arranged by a skilful hand. The marriage festival of Theseus and Hippolyta forms, so to say, a splendid golden frame to the whole picture, with which all the several scenes stand in some sort of connection. Within it we have the gambols of the elves among one another, which, like a gay ribbon, are woven into the plans of the loving couples and into the doings of the mechanics; hence they represent a kind of relation between these two groups, while the blessings which they at the beginning intended to bestow, and in the end actually do bestow, upon the house and lineage of Theseus make them partakers of the marriage feast, and give them a well-founded place in the drama. The play within the play, lastly, occupies the same position as a part of the wedding festivities.

If we look at the whole from these points of view and reflect upon the impression which the piece leaves upon us, it seems to me that there cannot be any doubt as to what was the spirit in which Shakspeare conceived it, and what was the intention and view which guided him in its composition. The title again intimates this. Human life appears conceived as a fantastic midsummer night's dream. As in a dream, the airy picture flits past our minds with the quickness of wit; the remotest regions, the strangest and most motley figures mix with one another, and, in form and composition, make an exceedingly curious medley; as in a dream they thwart, embarrass and disembarrass one another in turn, and—owing to their constant change of character and wavering feelings and passions—vanish, like the figures of a dream, into an uncertain *chiaro-scuro*; as in a dream, the play within the play holds up its puzzling concave mirror to the whole; and as, doubtless, in real dreams the shadow of reason comments upon the individual images in a state of half doubt, half belief—at one time denying them their apparent reality, at another again, allowing itself to be carried away by them—so this piece, in its tendency to parody, while flitting past our sight is, at the same time, always criticising itself.

It is a very old poetical idea to look upon life as a dream. Even in Plato's idealistic philosophy it is to a certain extent represented in this light, inasmuch as he supposes that the human mind weaves and forms out of the dark remembrances of its previous, true existence on earth (the ideas of things) a motley tissue of error and truth; Calderon also has worked out this idea in a serious, even though not actually tragic drama. To treat the idea seriously, however, is obviously a mistake in art; for in sober truth and in accordance with its full and true conception, human life is no dream, and this, in fact, is by no means what Plato meant to say. Only from a one-sided point of view, and one therefore which annuls itself, can it appear to be so; in fact only the one side of life is dream-like. For in a dream all the powers of the mind and soul are active in their way, and first the one and then the other maintains a certain ascendancy over the rest, as in waking reality. Except, however, that in a dream the self-consciousness which embraces all the powers of the mind and which arranges and controls them, is withdrawn from its position as the centre and gravitating point, and, so to say, loses itself in the different forces and endeavours which it ought to direct. The individual Self does, it is true, continue to exist in face of the world of dreams; it is sensitive, feels and thinks; but as—in accordance with its feelings and thoughts—dreamland is perpetually varying and changing its form, it, at the same time, becomes blended into one with reality; both sides lose their independence, their definite boundaries towards one another. Even the images, the objects which stand opposed to the dreaming individual Self, rise and flow one into the other, although the latter continually represents them to itself as things external, independent and distinct from itself. This accounts for the incoherency of dreams; they possess neither law nor order, in them, all is confusion. And inasmuch as the whole moves in the subjectivity of the mind which is forcibly isolated from the objective and external world, the interaction between the inner and outer world is annulled, and those objects which appear before the mind are but the reflexes of its own sensations and remembrances, wishes and desires; in the same way, the dream with

its ideas appears only an unsubstantial delusive image, which is annulled in its very origin and becomes absorbed by the reality of the waking state. But this reality itself resembles a dream when conceived from its transitoriness, its unsteadiness and uncertainty, as conditioned and determined by the play of accident as well as by the unaccountable changes of our feelings and humours, ideas and endeavours. Conceived in this light, our life stands in sharp contrast to that eternal, unchangeable future state which, in being certain of itself, is perfectly clear and bright, which satisfies all desires, to which we involuntarily look forward and which we are inclined to consider the only *true* state, as compared with our present, perplexing and transient existence.

Shakspeare places his poem into the midst of this contrast and conceives life as a dream in the spirit of this contrast. Regarding it in this light, he is right in denying it both order and regularity at the very outset; strength of will, reason and sense are removed to the background, while the fullest scope and licence are given to all the other mental faculties, especially to *fancy* and *feeling*, humour and caprice, and those gentle, hidden emotions of which we are usually not conscious, but which often considerably affect our lives. It is more particularly the *power of the imagination* that is active in all the characters represented, and the cause of their doings and strivings; it creates the dreams and governs the images of dreamland, and is therefore also the dominant power in the various characters of the piece. Accordingly, in the first place, love—the main lever of the action and as here conceived and described—is in reality founded only upon the imagination; Titania's fondness for the beautiful Indian boy is a mere whim or fancy, but even Oberon's jealousy is nothing more; old Egeus' preference for Demetrius appears wholly unfounded; it is pure imagination that he supposes that Demetrius and no other can ever become his son-in-law, and conversely, mere fancy in Hermia that she imagines she can marry none other than Lysander, and in Helena that she can love no other than Demetrius. This is proved by the ease with which a few drops of Puck's magic juice—which symbolises the influence of accidental, outward

circumstances, situations and relations—converts their feelings and turns their love into different channels. Nay, the force of the imagination has even so powerfully laid hold of such sober fellows as Bottom, Quince, and Flute, that they not only fancy themselves poets and actors, but are so afraid of the illusion they intend to produce—because they themselves are so engrossed by it—that they destroy it at the first opportunity. The same playful fancy also rules the course and the several incidents of the action. Lysander and Hermia endeavour by flight to escape from the power of the strange Athenian law and from the sentence pronounced upon them by Theseus; but the good Helena—who surely could only be the gainer by Hermia's absence—betrays their plan to the jealous Demetrius, because she fancies that she can thereby touch his heart, and thus win back his love. This is the starting point of the action, this first sets it in motion; all the other incidents of the piece are occasioned either by Oberon's intentional interference, by Puck's fantastic tricks, by accident and mistake, or by the change of sentiments and feelings, by the whims and waywardness, and the excited imagination of the various personages. The same powers determine the scenes, situations, actions and events in the land of dreams. When life is represented as a dream, the piece as well as art itself, degenerates into a mere illusion, and, accordingly, the above described element of self-parody, must not be wanting; the burlesque performed in the play by the mechanics is rather a matter of necessity for the complete fulfilment of the fundamental idea. As yet, as a dream, by virtue of its very nature, cannot maintain itself, as it must necessarily pass over into the waking, actual state of existence, so the heterogeneous elements which have thereby fallen into utter confusion and discord, are ultimately brought into agreement. The strange complications are solved, the marvellous forms of another world disappear, the mortals quit the enchanted wood and return to the common reality of town life, until in the end everything is brought into order, and the confused fantastic doings give way to what is natural, right and rational.

In the closing words with which the poet dismisses his

audience, he himself intimates the meaning of his play by saying :

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this and all is mended :
That you have but *slumber'd* here
While these visions did appear,
And this weak and idle theme
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend.

And by calling the piece not only a dream but 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' the poet gives it the more definite explanation which is also expressed in the plot and the fundamental features of the whole, viz., that it is not a heavy, melancholy dream, such as might be supposed to be produced by the dull, cold spirit of winter, but a gay, cheerful and airy image, such as we imagine might be dreamt on a bright midsummer night, full of yearning and fancy. This night it was customary to celebrate with festivals and mirth, and according to the popular superstition spirits then wandered about at will, certain herbs had a magic effect, and mortals were induced to play all kinds of mad, fantastic pranks.

It is self-evident that no eminent, staid or thoroughly consistent characters could take part in such a play. Only the commonest æsthetic misapprehension could, in this case, demand a sharp delineation of character true to nature. Hence all the figures—in accordance with the sense and spirit of the whole—are throughout drawn in a kind of wavering chiaro-scuro, with but a few light touches and no strong shades whatever. All are full of feeling and imagination, full of self-will and caprice, or, like Bottom and his associates, full of grotesque folly. Ordinary criticism, however, generally clings to the delineation of characters—a criterion readily discernible—and judges the value of the dramatic poem from this one point alone. This accounts for the fact of the earlier English and some of the recent German critics forming so poor an estimate of this play, and for their placing it as far back as possible into the days of the poet's youth. This much alone had hitherto been certain, that it existed as early as 1598, in which year it is mentioned by Meres.

It is only since the discovery of Dr. Forman's Diary that critics have thought that the year of its composition can now be determined more accurately. Forman gives a very accurate account of the remarkably cold and wet summer of 1594, and the features of this description do certainly coincide very closely with the destructive natural phenomena which Titania (ii. 1) describes as the sad results of the dispute between herself and Oberon. Halliwell* was the first to draw attention to this, and it is no doubt possible that, as he thinks, the play was written as early as the winter of 1594, and brought upon the stage at the beginning of the following year; earlier than this it certainly cannot have been written. Still, the above circumstance is not cogent, for the summer of 1594 may, even two or three years subsequently, have been the type from which the poet borrowed the several features in Titania's speech. From internal evidence I am inclined to assume that 1596-97 was the year in which the piece was composed. For, in spirit and character, it agrees so entirely with the works belonging to the close of the second period of Shakspeare's career that it would be difficult for any one to separate it from these. The great number of passages in rhyme, which occur more particularly in the conversations between the lovers, and the elves among one another, as well as the many interspersed poems and songs are naturally explained by the lyrical character of the whole and by the subject of the conversations.

Many commentators still think that the play was originally composed by Shakspeare as a kind of wedding present for his friend the Earl of Southampton. But the latter's marriage with Miss Vernon did not take place till 1598, hence, we should with Tieck have further to suppose that the piece did not appear in its present form till 1600, in which year it was printed. However, I consider this conjecture untenable; at all events it is not easy to see how the title of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'—by which, however, it is mentioned by Meres—could be appropriate for the 'masque' of Oberon and Titania with its 'anti-masque,' the play of the mechanics, in short, for

* *An Introduction to Shakspeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream,'* p. 6.

a mere epithalamium. But, in fact, it would in any case be a strange and almost impertinent proceeding to present a noble patron with a wedding present in the form of a poem where love—from its serious and ethical side—is made a subject for laughter and represented only from a comic aspect, in its faithlessness and levity, as a mere play of the imagination, and where even the marriage feast of Theseus appears in a comical light owing to the manner in which it is celebrated. And it would have even been a greater want of tact to bring a piece, composed for such an occasion, on to the public stage either before or after the earl's marriage.*

* Karl Elze (*Essays on Shakspeare*, p. 37, translated by L. D. Schmitz, London, 1874) has recently brought forward the hypothesis, and, in his usual scholarly manner, endeavoured to prove that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was not written for the marriage festival of the Earl of Southampton, but, no doubt, for the wedding of the Earl of Essex, which took place in the first months of the year 1590. His placing the piece back to the year 1589–90, and classing it in the same series with Shakspeare's earliest comedies—with *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, etc.—will, as I think, be a stumbling-block in the way of any one who knows how to estimate the beauties of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and who possesses any fine feeling for the differences of language, versification, composition and the leading motives of a poem. But apart from this objection—which, I admit, rests upon the unsafe ground of the feeling for style—apart from the inappropriateness of the subject for a wedding present, and apart also from the fact that Shakspeare's intimate relation with the Earl of Essex is a mere conjecture which cannot be proved by any authentic data, the hypothesis is contradicted by the circumstance that the marriage of the Earl of Essex (like that of the Earl of Southampton) was celebrated without the Queen's permission, accordingly 'clandestinely.' On this account it is not even known when the marriage took place, and that it must have taken place at latest in March or at the beginning of April, 1590, is only concluded from the birth of the eldest child in January, 1591. Dr. Elze tries in vain to find his way out of this difficulty, which he holds against Tieck's hypothesis. For even though Southampton may have had more reasons for keeping his marriage a secret than Essex, still a wedding with 'song and merriment' and with theatrical representations—hence with the participation of a whole company of players—is evidently no 'clandestine' marriage, and could not well have been kept secret from the Queen. Elze, it is true, thinks that Oberon's behest to the elves, 'Now, until break of day,' etc., obviously contains the poet's congratulations upon a marriage, and that the lines can scarcely be understood otherwise. I think, however, that the lines are to be understood only by its being presupposed that the piece refers to

As regards 'The Tempest,' on the other hand, Drake* has made it seem very probable that the piece cannot have been written before 1609-10. As has already been pointed out, a grave seriousness pervades the whole, and the formation of the characters, composition and language testify so decidedly to the poet's perfect mastery of his art, that the drama—as indeed is assumed by most commentators—must unquestionably be reckoned among Shakspeare's last works. We only know that it was performed at court on the 1st of November, 1611,† and

a marriage outside of the theatre. Directly, of course, they do refer to the marriage in the play, to the accomplishment of the object for the sake of which the fairies had come from India to Athens. It is much the same as regards the already quoted lines at the end of the piece: 'If we shadows have offended,' etc., which Elze thinks 'would be exceedingly flat and meaningless had they *not* been spoken at Essex's wedding.' But the reference which Elze assigns to these lines, can, in my opinion, be found only by our being first convinced of the existence of such a reference. Taken by themselves the lines have precisely as much sense and significance as similar passages in several others of Shakspeare's pieces, where the actors at the conclusion beg for a favourable reception of the play, and to be excused for any shortcomings and defects in the performance; their significance is even enhanced by the fact, that Shakspeare—as he is fond of doing—points to the meaning and significance of his composition as a whole in the closing words. Lastly, Elze endeavours to apply the allegorical explanation in favour of his hypothesis, according to which, (in the celebrated passage in act ii. 1, 'My gentle Puck, come hither,' etc.,) Cynthia is supposed to signify the Queen; the Earth (!) the Countess of Sheffield; the little Western Flower, the Countess of Essex (the mother of the bridegroom); Cupid, the Earl of Leicester (!);—an hypothesis which N. J. Halpin discusses at full length in his *Oberon's Vision in the Midsummer Night's Dream, illustrated*, etc., (London: pr. for the Sh. Soc. 1843). But I am bold enough, with Delius, not only at once to deny the allegorical significance of these lines, but to maintain that such a frosty and forced allegory might possibly suit the style of J. Lilly (from whose *Endymion* Halpin has borrowed it, and arranged it to suit the above passage), but that for this very reason it is thoroughly un-Shakspearian. In addition to this the connection between *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the so-called masques—upon which great emphasis is laid—seems to me, as already said, to be a very distant one, from which little or nothing can be deduced in favour of the marriage-hypothesis.

* *Life and Times of Shakspeare*, ii. 503.

† Peter Cunningham, *Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels*, etc., p. 211. According to an article in *The Athenæum* of June, 1868,

therefore K. J. Klement's* strange opinion naturally falls to the ground of itself. According to him the drama was written especially for the festival arranged in honour of the marriage of the Count Palatine with the Princess Elizabeth in 1612, and he considers it a thoroughly political piece, Prospero being supposed to represent King James, Alonso the King of Spain, Miranda the Princess Elizabeth, Ferdinand the Count Palatine, the witch Sycorax—only imagine!—the deceased Queen Elizabeth, and Caliban, partly the Indian savages in general, partly the colony of Virginia which Elizabeth honoured with her special patronage. Equally untenable is Hunter's† opinion, according to which 'The Tempest' is supposed to be the play mentioned by Meres under the title of 'Love's Labour Won' (which however no longer exists under this name), and that it appeared on the stage as early as 1595. For 'Love's Labour Won' is without doubt 'All's Well that Ends Well;' moreover, one of Gonzalo's speeches (ii. 1) is taken almost word for word from a passage in Florio's translation of Montaigne's Essays, and this did not appear till 1603. Lastly, as even Malone pointed out, Shakspeare's description of the tempest, as already said, bears an unmistakable resemblance to the account which Silvester Jourdan‡ gives of the hurricane which in July 1609 scattered the fleet, then on its way to Virginia and under the command of Sir G. Sommers, and drove the Admiral's ship on to the rocky shores of the Bermudas. Even the fact of the piece having been performed at court in 1611, and of its having been repeated at the beginning of 1613, during the festivities in honour of the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth, proves that it must at the time have still been

p. 863, *The Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels*, etc., are suspected of being forgeries in so far as they concern the theatrical performances, hence also as regards the representation of *Othello* and *Measure for Measure*. Further remarks on this point in the note at the end of Book vii.

* *Shakspeare's Sturm historisch beleuchtet*. Leipzig, 1846.

† *Disquisitions on the Scene, Origin, and Date of Shakspeare's Tempest*. London, 1839.

‡ *Discovery of the Bermudas*, etc., 1610

a new and favourite piece. This is corroborated, also, by a passage in Ben Jonson's 'Bartholomew Fair,' which was played for the first time in 1614; he there ridicules such poets as exhibit 'servant-monsters' and produce 'tales, tempests, and such-like drolleries.' What is most probable, therefore, is that 'The Tempest' must be assigned to the year 1611.*

* M. Carrière (No. 2 of his explanations to W. v. Kaulbach's *Shakspeare-galerie*, Berlin, 1857) in his ingenious description of *Shakspeare's Seelenleben und Geistesgeschichte*, establishes an hypothesis both profound and interesting (which Campbell had already incidentally brought forward), that *The Tempest* is Shakspeare's last dramatic work, and that he wrote the play, at all events, somewhat with the intention of offering it to his country as his farewell, a legacy of the mind and spirit in which he had conceived and poetically described life and history. Carrière illustrates and explains the piece in the spirit of this hypothesis, and in doing so, I am glad to say, agrees with my interpretation in all essential points. I, on my part, would be inclined to share so pleasing an hypothesis, were it not that the data we possess regarding the origin of *Henry VIII.* (which I shall speak of when discussing the piece) force us to assume that *Henry VIII.* was written one year later.

CHAPTER IV.

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST. THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.
ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

1. LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

'Love's Labour's Lost' is directly connected with 'Twelfth Night,' that is, if we consider the latter as standing midway between Shakspeare's comedies of Fancy and his comedies of Intrigue. The fantastic element is decidedly prominent. Caprice and accident, whimsical freaks, strange fantastico-comic characters and situations carry on their game, but *intrigue* predominates, inasmuch as the little action there is in the play turns upon the plots and counter-plots of the two contending parties in the sphere of love. This play accordingly forms the beginning of a series of pieces which may be termed the *Comedies of Intrigue*.

The young King of Navarre with three of his knightly companions form the strange resolution of devoting three years to study and philosophy in strict seclusion from the world and especially from all female society. They have bound themselves by an oath to keep this engagement. Their resolution, however, is soon thwarted by the arrival of the beautiful Princess of France accompanied by her ladies, who seeks an interview on urgent affairs of state, and therefore cannot be refused. All the champions of philosophy and seclusion fall in love with these ladies, who are as lovable as they are mischievous. Hereupon ensues a lively combat of wit and caprice, in which the knights either taunt and ridicule one another on account of their broken vow—trying at the same time to justify themselves, or seek to win their ladies' hearts; the latter, however, cleverly manage to defend themselves, outdo wit by wit, and satisfactorily punish the gentlemen for

breaking a vow, as quickly renounced as it was foolishly made, and for their affectation of superior wisdom. Interwoven with this, in an amusing contrast, are the comic scenes between two absurd learned pedants and an absurd knightly pedant, a young and saucy page and a privileged fool. This glittering fabric is suddenly torn to pieces by the announcement of the death of the father of the Princess, an infirm old man, and the piece closes with a moral expressed in a jocose manner, but in reality very serious in character: what the King and his companions had engaged to do in whimsical, arrogant caprice is forced upon them—though in a somewhat modified form—by their ladies. A song between Spring and Winter (cuckoo and owl) forms a graceful epilogue which, in a poetical chiaro-scuro, alludes to the meaning and purport of the whole.

The inner and ideal centre upon which this graceful piece turns—in the light, playful movement of its humour—is the significant contrast between the fresh reality of life which ever renews its youth, and the abstract, dry and dead, study of philosophy. This contrast, when, in absolute strictness, it completely separates the two sides that belong to one another, at once contains an untruth which equally affects both sides, deprives both of their claim of right, and leads them into folly and into contradiction with themselves. That philosophy which disregards all reality and seeks to bury itself within itself, either succeeds in entombing itself in the barren sand of a shallow, absurd and pedantic learning, or else—overcome by the fascinations of youthful life—it becomes untrue to itself, turns into its opposite, and is justly derided as mere affectation and empty pretence. One of these results is exhibited here in the case of the learned Curate Sir Nathaniel, and the Schoolmaster Holofernes, two starched representatives of the retailers of learned trifles, and in the pompous, bombastic Spanish Knight, a very Don Quixote in high-flown phraseology; the other is exhibited in the fate of the King and his associates. Owing to their capricious endeavour to gain knowledge and to study philosophy, by living an entirely secluded life, they at once fall into all the frivolities and follies of love; in

spite of their oaths and vows of fraternity, nature and living reality assert themselves and win an easy victory. And yet the victory of false wisdom is in reality nothing more than a victory of folly over folly. For nature and reality, taken by themselves are only changing pictures, transient phenomena to interpret which correctly is the task of the inquiring mind. When they are not rightly understood, when the *ethical* relations forming their substance are not recognised, then life itself degenerates into a mere semblance, all the activity and pleasure in life become mere play and frivolity; without the seriousness of this recognition, love is mere tinsel, while talent, intelligence and culture become mere vain wit and an empty play of thoughts. This recognition is not, however, attained by communities for philosophical study and discussions, but by serious self-examination, by the exercise of self-control and the curbing of one's own lusts and desires, by seclusion only in this sense and for this end. This, therefore, is imposed upon the Prince and his companions by their ladies as a punishment for their arrogance. The fine and ever correct judgment of noble women, is here as triumphant as their great talent for social wit and refined intrigue. The moral of the piece may be said to be contained in the speech of the Princess where she condemns the King to a twelvemonth's fast and strict seclusion, in the sense intimated above, and again in the words of Rosaline, in which she makes it a condition to the vain Biron—a man who boasts of the power of his mind and wit in social intercourse—that, to win her love he shall for a twelvemonth from day to day visit 'the speechless sick' and 'converse with groaning wretches,' and, in order to exercise all the powers of his wit, demands of him 'to force the pained impotent to smile.' The end of the comedy thus, to a certain extent, returns to where it began: both sides of the contrast out of which it arose prove themselves untenable in their one-sided exclusiveness; the highest delight and pleasure of existence, all wit and all talents are mere vanity without the earnestness and depth of the thoughtful mind which apprehends the essence of life; but study and philosophy, also, are pure folly when kept quite apart

from real life. It is the same contrast as that between Spring and Winter (cuckoo and owl): if separate from one another they would lead either to excessive luxuriousness or to a deadly state of torpidity; but they are not separate and are not intended to be separate, their constant change in rising out of and passing over one into the other, in short, their mutual inter-action produces *true* life.

This deeper significance of the merry piece, with its fine irony and harmless satire, is, of course, not expressed in didactic breadth, but only intimated in a playful manner. Shakspeare was too well aware that it was not the business of the drama to preach morals, and that to give pedantic emphasis to the serious ethical relations would not only injure the effect of the comic, but absolutely destroy it. And yet it is only the above-described contrast from which the whole is conceived, and upon which its deeper significance rests, that explains why Shakspeare furnished the main action—the bearers of which are the King and the Princess with their knights and ladies—with the ludicrous subordinate figures of Sir Nathaniel, Holofernes, Don Armado and Dull, etc., and with a series of intermezzos which apparently stand in no sort of connection with it. These obviously form an essential part of the whole, and the addition of the satirical element is, at the same time, intended to place its significance in a still clearer light. For there can scarcely be any doubt that the piece contains a satirical tendency, even though it be only as a secondary motive. Further, it was doubtless intended to parody the pretentious, pedantic learning (which, as we have already seen, at first combatted the popular theatre, or contemptuously turned its back upon it), as well as the want of taste with which, not only John Lilly, but even his learned predecessors, and still more so his servile imitators, did their best to corrupt the English language by coquetting with points, antitheses, alliterations, etymologies and orthographical improvements, and by the perpetual introduction of Latin phrases and learned allusions, images and similies.* The

* Holofernes is supposed—by Warburton and Farmer—to represent John Florio, a teacher of Italian. See Drake i. 474; ii. 493. Knight, *Shakspeare Studies*, p. 122 f.

piece thus receives not merely a significant secondary purport, but its peculiar character also is thereby determined. For wherever Shakspeare, in his comedies, allows the interference of the satirical element, he surrounds it with such an abundance of wit and jest, that it is, so to say, lost in their midst; this is evidently done to rid it of its offensive sting, and to lessen the impression of deliberateness. The reason of the poet's having given the whole such a bright colouring, is, that when regarded from without, the piece appears to be but an insignificant play of jest and joke, but a merry rivalry of wit and banter among the dramatic personages.

That this comedy existed as early as 1598, and indeed had existed some time previously, is proved by the extant quarto edition of 1598, and also by the testimony of Meres, who mentions it together with its pendant 'Love's Labour Won.' The latter, as already said, is undoubtedly identical with 'All's Well that Ends Well,' and Shakspeare subsequently merely altered its title for reasons unknown to us, perhaps because he felt, that owing to the difference in the fundamental meaning of the two pieces, the similarity of the titles had no proper sense. For 'All's Well that Ends Well,' in spirit and meaning is much more closely allied to 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona,' than to 'Love's Labour's Lost;' it is only as regards its subject that it forms a sort of contrast to the latter. The subject-matter in the present case, however, seems to be Shakspeare's own invention,* whereas in 'All's Well that Ends Well' he drew his materials from a novel of Boccaccio; † and in 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona' several main features, at least, are taken from an episode in the Spanish pastoral romance of 'Diana in Love,' by Montemajor, and

* Douce, *Illustrations of Shakspeare*, etc., conjectures that *Love's Labour's Lost* also is founded upon some French tale; but his conjecture is a mere conjecture. Moreover, why should not Shakspeare, perhaps stimulated by some old Italian comedy (as might be imagined from such figures as the braggart Armado and the pedant Holofernes, which were quite common on the Italian stage), have followed his own invention, especially when it was as simple as in the present case?

† *Decameron III.*, which was translated into English as early as 1566, by Paynter, in his *Palace of Pleasure*, i. 28, and has been reprinted by Collier in his *Shakspeare's Library*, vol. ii. No. 3.

from Sydney's 'Arcadia.'* But as regards another main feature—the story of the friendship between Valentine and Proteus—no certain source has as yet been discovered. The publication of the three comedies probably falls within the years 1590 and 1593. To determine the date of their origin more accurately than this is, I think, impossible, considering the meagreness of our information; yet 'All's Well that Ends Well' may perhaps be regarded as having appeared somewhat later than 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona' and 'Love's Labour's Lost.' The greater finish manifested throughout the whole of 'Love's Labour's Lost,' is unquestionably owing to the later revision which, as we positively know, the piece was subjected to by Shakspeare about 1597.† This probably also accounts for the greater finish of its versification, its sharper distinction between the differences of expression in which the various personages converse with one another, each according to his respective character.‡ That it was originally older, at least than 'All's Well that Ends Well,' is proved by the frequent occurrence of rhymes, which occur throughout whole scenes, together with rhyming couplets and doggerel verses which Shakspeare allowed to remain after his revision. There is also, as I think, in Shakspeare's own diction a re-echo of that pretentious style of writing peculiar to Lilly which delighted in antitheses and puns, and which Shakspeare himself ridi-

* The translation of Montemajor's *Diana* into English (by J. Yonge) did not appear till 1598; but Shakspeare might have known the story of Felismene (Julia), either from an eclogue of Barnaby Googe (according to Malone it appeared in 1563), which, as Simrock observes, is only a versified imitation of Montemajor's episode, or, he might have taken it directly from that novel of Bandello (ii. 36), of which he subsequently made use in his *Twelfth Night*, and from which Montemajor had borrowed his subject. Compare Simrock, *l. c.* iii. 256 f.

† On the title-page of the above-mentioned quarto of 1598, it is expressly said, "newly corrected and augmented:" and as, in addition, we have the further remark, "as it was presented before her Highness this last Christmas," the revision must have been completed before Christmas, 1597. That it was made by Shakspeare's own hand, is evident from the fact that the text of the folio of 1623 is only a reprint of this same quarto.

‡ Attention has been drawn to this fact by Hr. von Friessen, in the *Shakspeare-Jahrbuch*, ii. 58 f.

cules, whereas the characters, owing to the one-sided and sketchy manner in which they are every now and again drawn (for instance, Armado, Holofernes, Sir Nathaniel), border upon caricatures, and betray the youthful want of psychological culture.

When Malone and Drake assign 'All's Well that Ends Well' to the year 1598, and Chalmers places it as late as 1599, they are quite at fault, to judge from all the internal evidence (character, language, versification, etc.), Chalmers even because 'All's Well that Ends Well,' as already said, is without doubt identical with the 'Love's Labour Won' mentioned by Meres, whereas Malone and Drake have omitted to consider the possibility, as to how two or even three pieces could have been *written* by Shakspeare in 1598, and yet be mentioned by Meres whose work was *printed* in the same year. Still Coleridge, Tieck, Collier, and Knight fancy that 'All's Well that Ends Well' contains traces of two different styles, of which one is supposed to belong to an earlier, the other to a later period in Shakspeare's style of diction; Shakspeare therefore, they think, must subsequently have remodelled the piece, and that this would also explain the change of the title.* I bow to these authorities, although I cannot say that I have here found much greater deviations in style than in most of the earlier plays, all of which Shakspeare probably altered and improved at a later date. It, however, seems to me that 'All's Well that Ends Well' stands somewhat nearer to the maturer years of the poet's career than 'Love's Labour's Lost,' and 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona.' The latter piece, at all events, is dated too late by Malone and Chalmers; for although both maintain that the piece, as regards character, language and versification, is one of his earlier compositions, they nevertheless do not place it earlier than 1595—again because of certain supposed allusions to events of the time, but especially because of some lines which speak of discoveries of islands, of war and pestilence, which Malone refers to the plague of 1593, to the second invasion threatened by Spain, and to Sir Walter Raleigh's voyage of discovery in 1595. We have, however, already

* Collier's *Shakspeare*, iii. 203. Knight, *Shaksp. Studies*, p. 134 f.

seen, in the case of 'Twelfth Night,' how little weight can be attached to such single features, the correct significance of which must ever remain very doubtful.

2. THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

This piece I consider one of Shakspeare's earliest works. It is true that, as regards details, the play is rich in peculiar beauties, but, taken as a whole, we still observe a certain youthful awkwardness, and a want of depth in poetical execution. It is distinguished by an easy, smooth and harmonious flow of language, by a freshness, gaiety and *naïveté* of wit and humour (as in Speed and Launce), and by a delineation of character which is indeed sketchy, but nevertheless well given. Even the sharp contrast into which—as we have seen—Shakspeare is fond of placing his characters, and which he employs as the principle of his groupings, is here specially prominent in the characters of Proteus and Valentine, Julia and Silvia, Speed and Launce. But the very sharpness of these contrasts, and the carefully worked out parallels between the contrasted couples, betrays the youthful poet. Moreover, as a whole, the play makes the impression of superficiality; not only is the conception of life in general, but even the individual thoughts are wanting in depth and breadth; the several parts are not smoothly rounded off nor are they harmoniously connected. Much that ought to have been further developed is only hinted at, and the end, especially, is introduced so arbitrarily, and so hurriedly brought to a close that some English critics have conjectured that the piece was never actually finished. Excellent, indeed, is the manner in which the poet has contrived to make use of the materials indispensable to comic poetry—accident, caprice and error, inconsistency, weakness, folly and perversity; intrigue does predominate, it is true, but is borne along and supported by the fantastic elements of external and internal contingency. But the humour, which in Shakspeare's later comedies pervades the whole, and gives them their comic significance, is wanting; the poet is still too much absorbed in directing the course of the action, and in the

delineation of the characters ; we cannot help noticing the trouble which it has cost him to find the end and aim of his drama ; in short, he is still too much engrossed with his actual work, and this checks the flight of his thought, and the free play of his imagination.

Love, in its double form of sexual love and friendship, is evidently the basis of the whole, the leading centre of the action. To represent this foundation in its uncertainty and instability—in other words, to describe it within the comic view of life, in contradiction with its true nature, is manifestly the purport and tendency of the play ; this is, however, too seriously and strongly emphasised, and thus the representation loses in comic power. Love is here, accordingly, represented in the most diversified forms, but invariably weak and frail, foolish and perverse. The centre is formed by the passion of Proteus for Julia, his double faithlessness and his equally sudden conversion ; a look from Silvia, her mere appearance, makes him forget the one for whom he has just been sighing, and for whose absence tears are still lingering in his eyes ; a look from her makes him a traitor to his best and oldest friend, and also makes him deceive the Duke and the latter's favourite, Thurio. In fact, he is the impersonation of the faithlessness of love. In contrast to him we have Julia ; she is exhibited at first in the capricious self-will of a girl in love, but coy, who will not accept her lover's letter, and yet chides her maid that the latter has not forced her to read it ; she tears it to pieces before she has opened it, but afterwards gathers up the fragments in order to try and spell out the contents. Suddenly, however, this coyness is quite forgotten, nay, turns into its opposite, for, casting aside all girlish shyness, she dresses herself in man's attire and sets out after her faithless lover, acts as his messenger in carrying love-letters to Silvia, and finally, after enduring all this mortification, again throws herself into his arms. A greater amount of constancy is exhibited in the other couple, Valentine and Silvia ; they remain true to one another in spite of all obstacles, sufferings and adversities, and yet Valentine is capable of giving up his beloved—for whose sake he has done and suffered so much, and whom he intended to carry off from her father's

house—in favour of his treacherous and only half-repentant friend, although the latter, on account of Silvia's aversion to him, could in no way be a gainer by his sacrifice. Thurio, lastly, is a lover of the commonest type, a wealthy blockhead, more interested in the father as a duke than in the daughter, and who resembles his more gifted rivals only in so far as he likewise does not know his own mind—continuing to make love *although* he is rejected with scorn and contempt, and in the end retiring *because* he is rejected with scorn and contempt. This fickle, inconstant and contradictory form of love is worthily associated with the Duke's peculiar paternal affection for his daughter; here also we have a high degree of delusion and inconsistency. After having at first purposed to force his daughter's inclinations in favour of a repulsive old noodle, he at last consents to give her to a robber chieftain whom—as an honourable knight—he had rejected. But the delicious folly reaches its climax in the person of the inimitable Launce, one of those thoroughly comic characters whose true nature Shakspeare alone can describe. Launce, who for weeping and wailing can scarcely leave his father's house, whose tears would fill the river were it dry, and whose sighs, “were the wind down,” would drive on the boat that is carrying him away from his home—it is he who allows himself to be cudgelled for the sake of his “cruel-hearted cur,” to be set in the stocks and placed in the pillory, and nevertheless rejoices at the punishment inflicted upon his friend Speed for a fault into which he himself had intentionally led him. In fact, he is the most amusing impersonation both of sentimental folly and foolish sentimentality, and of the self-will and blindness of love.

Thus love is here exhibited as the central and gravitating point upon which the whole action turns, that is to say, in the comic conception of life, consequently in its entire weakness and frailty, and from the most varied aspects. Accident, inconstancy, and the caprice of the lovers, occasion the beginning of the complication, and accident, inconstancy, and caprice in the end bring everything back into its right groove and to a happy issue. Hence this early, perhaps earliest, work of Shakspeare's in the

domain of comedy, already reflects the same idea of the comic which forms the basis of his mature and maturest comedies. Its one defect is that this play of inconstancy, of weakness and delusion, is not worked out with a corresponding play of humour, but with a certain seriousness which is neither appropriate to the comic substance of the whole nor to the superficial, inconsistent and wavering characters. Shakspeare, no doubt, in this comedy also wished to show that unbridled passion, weakly compliance with our changeful feelings, inclinations and desires, can occasion the fall of noble characters not only into unbecoming actions and dangerous complications, but into the deepest sloughs of immorality, into breach of faith, falsehood and deception. And yet he can scarcely have had the pedantic intention (imputed to him by Gervinus) of only setting forth a warning against that love which, in its inconstancy, delusion, etc., has all these evil effects, or of wishing to recommend the prose of a well-tempered affection which takes all circumstances and consequences carefully into its consideration.

3. ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

The play of 'All's Well that Ends Well,' as already said, is likewise one of Shakspeare's earlier works. In wealth of thought, in the variety and development of the characterisation, and in the greater definiteness of the action, it far surpasses 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona.' On the other hand, the language is still somewhat obscure and awkward, which, as I think, does not, as in the case of Shakspeare's later dramas, arise from the superabundance of the thoughts that crowd upon him, but from his still insufficient power of thoroughly forming and arranging them. The imagery and similes appear now and again far-fetched, and the wit and banter do not yet flow as smoothly and freely as at a later period. The composition also is not as successful as in most of his later comedies; several of the characters, such as the Countess and the Duke of Florence, Lafeu, and Parolles, Violenta and Mariana, do indeed take some external, but no internal part in the action. The reason of this unalterable and chief defect of

the whole lies, it seems to me, in the subject-matter of the piece, which is not exactly happily chosen; for it must necessarily be offensive to a fine sense of feeling when, in courtship, woman is the wooer, and especially when this unwomanly proceeding—however well motivated and excusable it may appear—is not merely narrated (as in Boccaccio's novel) but represented to us in a vivid, dramatic and palpable form. To overcome this difficulty, and more particularly to make the surprising conclusion—the heroine's attainment of her wish—appear natural, the poet had, as it were, to take into his service a number of figures simply as motives and to bring the action to a close. But the very choice of this subject, and his adhering to it, in spite of its obvious difficulties, shows us the youthful poet, the youthful pleasure in that which is unusual, the youthful inclination to venture upon a task the difficulties of which have not been sufficiently considered.

Helena, the high-minded, excellent girl, whose virtue and nobility of soul raise her far above the lowliness of her birth, allows herself to be led astray by the ardour of her love, and indulges in the fond belief that she can win the heart of the high-born, rich and powerful Count Roussillon by her own merits; in this she is encouraged by the mother of the man she loves. Fortune favours her; she succeeds in curing the King of what appeared to be a fatal illness, and he, in accordance with a desire expressed by Helena, commands the Count to marry her. But she soon learns the bitter truth that marriage without love cannot even form an external bond, much less one that is internal, and that love—the moment its own indefeasible right, its freedom is affected—scorns all rights and duties, even the claims of virtue, beauty and amiability. What she had in vain claimed as due to her virtue and her 'merit,' she attains at last by a fortunate accident; this she makes use of, not as an exactly delicate means of deception, but one that is excusable considering her position, and it enables her to fulfil the apparently impossible conditions to which the Count had linked the bestowal of his love.

Love, therefore, is here also the centre and gravitating point upon which turns the development—beginning,

middle and end—of the action. It is, however, not conceived in so general and independent a light as in 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona.' The significance of the whole is based rather on the one main feature of love, its freedom; this is so essentially a part of its nature that, in fact, love exists only as a free, unmerited and unrequited gift, by virtue of which it has the right—it may be even to its own unhappiness—of sometimes choosing and striving to obtain what circumstances would deny it, and of rejecting what is best and most beautiful, simply because it is forced upon it. But this very freedom is its weak point, as long as it has not freed itself from caprice; for it either degenerates into arrogance and error, or into blind self-will and pride. Helena pays the penalty of this arrogance which, in spite of her otherwise modest and unpretending nature, shows itself in her wanting to deprive the man she loves of his right to make that free choice which she herself had exercised in so unlimited a manner; for, notwithstanding her acquired rights, she is compelled to have recourse to degrading artifice to obtain possession of what belongs to her. The Count, on the other hand, wilfully rejects what he himself secretly and half-unconsciously wished;* he falls from freedom into caprice, because he prides himself in his freedom, and this pride feels itself hurt at being *required* to take what he had hoped to be able to *give* freely. Once the victim of caprice and a slave to his desires, whims, inclinations and wishes, he is even in danger of losing his innate nobleness of heart. He becomes a frivolous deceiver and seducer, till at last, an act of deception restores him to his better self. His unsuccessful wooing of Diana proves that love can as little be forced by promises and gifts, as by merits and good deeds.

This strange concatenation of delusion, contradiction and aberration in the human heart, this direct union of love with the most opposite actions and endeavours, faults and weaknesses, this quick change of maidenly reserve into open courtship, and conversely of original affection into contemptuous aversion, and, lastly, the equally sudden return of love to its own self—all this, which is the result

* Compare act v. 3.

of the nature of love, of its essential, fundamental attribute—its intrinsic freedom—shows us love wholly absorbed in that universal and all-embracing contingency and caprice in which human life is involved when conceived from the comic point of view. Delusion, contradiction and aberration ultimately neutralise each other, and that which is right and true prevails. The effect is enhanced, on the one hand, by the presumption of the King in supposing that his love and gratitude for Helena can be repaid by the heart and hand of the Count; on the other hand, by Parolles—the little precursor of the great Falstaff—who makes a complete caricature of the character of Count Rousillon, of his independent and imperious nature, his martial courage and thirst for action, and who holds up the vanity of empty pride in its entire nakedness. Lastly, the Clown, who was so anxious to get married, finds out, after he is puffed up by his visit to court, that ‘our ling and our Isbels o’ the country are nothing like your old ling and your Isbels o’ the court.’

CHAPTER V.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. THE TAMING OF THE SHREW.

1. MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

IN 'Much Ado About Nothing,' as in most of the other comedies, it is again a kind of love-tale upon which the interest and the given intrigue are centred. And yet love itself is not the object of the representation, not the fundamental motive of the poem. The significance of the whole lies rather in the conception of human life from the contrast which it contains—the contrast between its essential worth and nature, and its estimation and aspect in the eyes of special individuals; between that which it actually is and that which it appears to its representatives. Love—as the most common motive of complications, which in themselves are unimportant and ordinary, but which appear very different to the persons concerned—is but the means employed to bring the contrast clearly forward.

It is this contrast that makes its presence felt in all directions, and in all the chief incidents of the piece: we everywhere have relations, incidents and actions, the true internal form of which are unimportant and of everyday occurrence, but which appear in a pompous outward form, and treated with grave consideration by the persons involved in it. First of all, in the shape of a prelude behind the scenes, we have a war and a treaty, half a feud and half a reconciliation between the royal brothers of Arragon, for which no reason existed, and the result of which is nothing. Then in the form of an intermezzo, the misunderstanding in Don Pedro's courtship of Hero, which Claudio suspects of being an unparalleled breach of faith, which suspicion however—as is soon proved—is but the creation of his own love-sick brain. This, and the

story of the loves of Benedict and Beatrice—the two sworn foes of matrimony, who are perpetually engaged in hot skirmishes against each other and against all that breathes the name of love or tenderness, and who are, at last, by a trick both simple and playfully carried out, themselves caught in the meshes of love, and do just that which they themselves had ridiculed with all possible expenditure of wit—forms, so to say, the scaffolding which exhibits the spirit and meaning of the whole in various modifications; they are, so to say, the side-pieces supporting the main complication which threatens to be the ruin of the loves of Hero and Claudio. In fact, a quickly contrived and superficially motivated intrigue—a freak of the wicked Don John supported by chance—temporarily breaks the newly-made bond of love; this is unfortunately an every-day occurrence, but one which is here, in reality, founded upon mere semblance, yet it nevertheless throws the persons concerned into a state of passionate excitement, into trouble and misery, and, accordingly, is by them treated as of the utmost importance. This is followed by apparent death and funeral pomp, by challenges to fight and friendship broken off, and finally—after the nothingness of an accident reveals the truth—by inquiries, vindications of honour, and funereal solemnities, until, in the end, Hero, who is supposed to be dead, comes forth from her concealment, and the piece closes with merry wedding festivities.

Most delightful is the contradiction between appearance and reality, between subjective conception and objective reality, as we have it exhibited in the Clown of the piece, the dutiful constable Dogberry, who considers his position so very important and maintains it so zealously, but who is always uttering contradictory maxims and precepts; who is so presumptuous and yet so modest; who looks at things with so correct an eye and yet pronounces such foolish judgments; talks so much and yet says so little, in fact, perpetually contradicts himself, giving orders for what he advises to be left undone, entreating to be registered an ass, and yet is the very one to discover the *nothing* which is the cause of the *much ado*. He is the chief representative of that view of life upon

which the whole is based, inasmuch as its comic power is exhibited most strongly and most directly in him. For this contrast, which, in accordance with its nature, usually appears divided between its two poles, is, so to say, individualised in him, that is, united in the one individual and fully reflected in his inconsistent and ever contradictory doings and resolves, thoughts and sayings. Dogberry personifies, if we may say so, the spirit and meaning of the whole, and, therefore, plays essentially the same part as the Fool in 'Twelfth Night,' Touchstone in 'As You Like It,' Launce in 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona,' and the majority of the clowns in Shakspeare's comedies. Besides this, he is also an important character in so far as it is he who discovers the rascally trick of Don John and his accomplice which gives rise to the whole complication; in fact, the comic caprice of accident delights in employing the most comic of all characters, the clowns *par excellence*, to bring to light that which it was indeed easy enough to discover, which, however, the sense of the sensible personages did not perceive. At all events our point of view gives an easy and simple explanation as to why Shakspeare conferred the difficult task of unravelling the entangled knot upon such a peculiarly foolish fellow as Dogberry, and why he made him the clown of the piece and conceived his character in this and in no other light.

But in reality the characters of Benedict and Beatrice also, represent in themselves the contrast, upon which the whole action turns. Both are not what they seem to be and what they imagine themselves to be. Beatrice—the apparently heartless, frivolous chatterbox, always joking and making a display of her pertinent, merciless wit, whose whole character seems to lie in her sharp tongue—is, in reality, as the end shows, a girl of deep and lofty feelings, of a pure and noble mind, great in heart and soul, and full of deep love and devotion; this is proved more particularly by her affection for the deceived and ill-used Hero, whose innocence she alone maintains and defends with steadfast assurance, and for the sake of whose rescue she urges Benedict to challenge Claudio to fight—thus magnanimously staking the life of her own

beloved, whom she assuredly loves with equal intensity. It is much the same as regards Benedict. He, too, the renowned wit, the scoffer and woman-hater, is not at all so heartless and devoid of feeling as he appears; his heart, too, is easily moved when he hears of Beatrice's love for himself, and the spark which, unknown to himself, was already in a glow for her, bursts into flame as suddenly as it rises in Beatrice's heart when fanned by similar circumstances. Both in reality, therefore, as already intimated, make much ado about nothing; the noise of the warfare of their wit and ridicule against love of every description is, in reality, an empty hubbub, their hostility against each other a mere semblance, their aversion to the bond of matrimony pure imagination, sheer illusion in which they have become unconsciously entrapped. This justifies Shakspeare for having given these two characters and their relation to each other so much scope and so prominent a position, although externally they stand in but a very loose connection with the main action, and, in reality, contribute nothing towards its development.

If, accordingly, the secondary figures are in no way superfluous, but each rather conceived and developed in accordance with the living organism of which they are integral parts, we shall see that the same can also be maintained of the chief characters, the actual supporters of the action. The characters of Claudio and Don Pedro, whose conduct may perhaps excite more surprise than that of the others, are as correctly conceived as they are consistently worked out. Claudio—an honourable and brave soldier, but spoiled by good fortune, and proud and confident in himself, owing to his rapid successes—is one of that large class of men who are easily aroused, take up things hastily and warmly, but as quickly cool down again, and let fall what they have gained. His inconsiderate credulity is quite in accordance with the thoughtless haste with which he becomes betrothed to Hero. His harsh treatment of her, and the want of loving-kindness which induces him to reserve his charge against her to the last moment, so as to put her to open shame at the very altar, arises partly from the shallowness of his

hastily-formed attachment, and partly from a belief that his wounded sense of honour requires the severe chastisement of such base infidelity. Don Pedro, in reality, takes part in the course of the action only because he wishes to pass his time in a pleasant manner, and also to give a proof of his affection for Claudio and his esteem and friendly disposition towards Leonato. Regarded in this light his conduct is quite natural. He is necessary to the organism of the whole, as a foil to the characters of Claudio and Benedict, and in order to afford a proper motive for the quick consent of Leonato and his daughter to Claudio's offer. Equally indispensable and natural is the character and behaviour of his brother Don John. The latter's reconciliation with Don Pedro is only an appearance; he is thoroughly malicious, and cherishes an undying hatred in his heart. For this reason it gives him pleasure to undermine the happiness of others; but in the present case his malice also finds special gratification in destroying what his detested brother has brought about, of insulting his friends and of estranging them from him.

Shakspeare does not allow his dramatic characters to make a display of all their thoughts and intentions because, in fact, they exist for *action*; the motives must proceed naturally from their manner of conduct, and from given circumstances and situations. Hence even Beatrice's command to Benedict to kill Claudio—which has given so much offence—appears in perfect keeping with the energetic character of the quick, excitable girl, who allows herself to be carried away by the ardour of her loving heart, and is also appropriate with the spirit of the whole piece. Beatrice could not be so fond of banter, so delightfully imperious and exuberant in spirit, so frank and bold in overflowing mischievousness, so proud of her intelligence, so firm in her convictions, did she not stand, as it were, on the extreme borders between manliness and womanliness of character, without, however, ever trespassing beyond this boundary. She is kept from trespassing beyond it, and hence, from the accusation of complete want of womanliness, by her pure, sincere, and unalterable love for the belied Hero, by her high appre-

ciation of chastity and fidelity in woman, and of virtue and honour which must have felt itself deeply aggrieved at Claudio's actions. Lastly, when the earlier English critics (as Stêevens) reproach Shakspeare for having allowed the same trick to be played upon Benedict as upon Beatrice, and thereby of having weakened the comic effect, they have neglected to consider that this uniformity was a matter of necessity, partly because of the resemblance between the two characters, and even more so, in order that the already complicated intrigue should not be still more and needlessly involved. For the spectators must ever be in a position readily to survey the course of the action; this is an indispensable requisite of a good comedy of intrigue.

The correctness of the above explanation is attested by the title of the play. The *much ado about nothing*, however, is obviously not conceived merely in an external sense; it rather denotes the internal contradiction into which all human existence falls, when wholly engrossed with individual, special and accidental interests and relations; in other words, when man—treating important matters with playful levity—recklessly follows his momentary impulses, feelings and caprices, without asking whether they are justifiable, and whether his resolves are based upon safe foundations. This serious ethical maxim Shakspeare has carefully concealed under the mask of comedy, under the gay picture which represents human life itself as a 'much ado about nothing.'

Moreover, the piece is probably one of those belonging to the first decade of Shakspeare's poetical activity; but every feature—language, characterisation and composition—already bears witness to the masterly skill which Shakspeare attained during this period. The play is a worthy pendant to 'As You Like It' and 'Twelfth Night,' which in my opinion mark the culminating point of his poetry in the domain of comedy. It is entered at Stationers' Hall under the date of 1600, and was printed in the same year, yet it is not enumerated in Meres' list. Hence the play was most probably written in 1599; this supposition is not only agreed to by Drake and Malone but by most commentators. It is a well-known fact that the

subject is taken from a novel of Bandello's,* which, however, is also very like the story of Ariodante and Genevra in Ariosto's 'Orlando Furioso.'† To examine more minutely into the manner in which the novel differs from the drama which is founded upon it, and what are the deviations and additions made by Shakspeare, is a question more directly interesting to a poet, and but little concerns the æsthetic critic. The latter has to look upon every drama only as the free product of the artist's activity. If, as such, it forms a living organic whole, and the whole, as well as its several parts, bear the impress of an inner poetical necessity, then it is self-evident that every alteration in the subject upon which it is founded must be regarded as right and appropriate. Shakspeare, however, as usual, has pretty closely followed his authorities as regards the course of the action. And yet all the comic characters (Benedict and Beatrice also) are his own invention. The depth, the conception which he has succeeded in breathing into the subject is altogether his own. Bandello has, in fact, given us merely an amusing novel, in which the course of events and the development of the intrigue is the main thing, whereas idea and delineation of character are left almost wholly out of consideration.

2. TAMING OF THE SHREW.

I connect 'Much Ado About Nothing' with another comedy of intrigue apparently very different in character, because, in my opinion, notwithstanding all the dissimilarities, it is internally related to it, both in spirit and character, and may be regarded as a kind of fore-runner to 'Much Ado About Nothing.'

The 'Taming of the Shrew,' according to Tieck, was not written before 1606 or 1607; he thinks that Shakspeare, in the Induction, speaks in commendation of an actor (called Sincklo in the folio edition) and of the part he played (that of Soto, a jovial young farmer) in a comedy

* Bandello, i. 22.

† Ariosto, vol. v.—Compare Echterneyer and Simrock *l.c.* ii. 1 f., also Mrs. A. Lenox: *Shakspeare illustrated, or the Novels and Histories*, etc. London, 1753.

of Fletcher's; also, that Fletcher made his first appearance as a poet in 1604 or 1605 at the earliest, that accordingly, the comedy entitled 'Women Pleas'd,'—the one here referred to—although one of his later works, was probably not written till 1605 or 1606. Collier* was, at first, of the same opinion, but for a different reason. He believed that act i., 1, contained an allusion to Th. Heywood's 'Woman Killed with Kindness,' which did not appear till after 1602. But we have already, in the case of 'Twelfth Night,' had sufficient proof of how deceptive are such solitary indications and allusions. Collier† was afterwards of the opinion that it appeared in the beginning of 1602 (after 'Hamlet,' which he assigns to the year 1601) inasmuch as Shakspeare there makes a wrong use of the name Baptista, by applying it to a woman, whereas he has here employed it correctly as the name of Catherine's father. However, style and character, language and versification in the 'Taming of the Shrew,' more especially the many passages entirely in rhyme, the frequent rhyming-couplets, the doggerel lines, the sketchy delineation of several of the characters, the loose connection of the action—more particularly between the intriguing play of Bianca's suitors and Petruchio's undertakings (as Tieck and Collier also admit)—speak decidedly in favour of an earlier origin, except that some passages as clearly give indications of later corrections; such, however, may be presupposed in the case of every one of Shakspeare's works. This would, accordingly, not only explain the above allusions, but also the poet's better knowledge of the Italian language, to which Brown‡ has directed attention, and which certainly is very striking compared with his earlier pieces (as in 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona' and others). The first appearance of the play, as I think, falls to about the same date as 'All's Well that Ends Well,' that is, to about the year 1593. The fact of Meres not mentioning it, might have arisen from his not unjustly considering it a mere remodelling of the older 'Taming of a Shrew' (a piece printed in 1594,

* *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, iii. 77.

† *His Shakspeare*, iii. 104.

‡ *Shakspeare's Autobiographical Poems*, p. 104 f.

but doubtless some years older)* which not only furnished Shakspeare with his subject-matter, but forms the basis of his remodelling inasmuch as it refers and points back to it.

The drama, as we now have it, has the peculiarity of appearing to be both complete and incomplete. If we confine our attention to the principal part, to the play within the play which gives its name to the piece, it appears quite complete and finished. But the induction—in which a common drunkard is accidentally met by a noble lord, and transported to the latter's castle while in a state of drunken unconsciousness, and on awakening is treated by the nobleman and his attendants as if he were a rich and powerful lord, merely labouring under the fixed delusion of being a common tinker, to amuse and distract whom strolling players are then called in to exhibit the actual play—looks like a mere prelude, like a beginning without either development or end. For the merry introductory device is very soon set aside, and the piece concludes with the play within the play. In so far, therefore, the drama is incomplete. It may be that Shakspeare intentionally refrained from working out the double plot introduced, because he found that the play would thereby become too long, and thus lose its suitability for the stage; it may also be that it has, by some accident, come down to us in an actually imperfect form, or that

* Reprinted in the *Six old Plays*, etc., vol. ii.—It contains a number of passages taken word for word from Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *Dr. Faustus*, and others which are indeed not word for word the same, but give Marlowe's similes, imagery and phrases with but slight modifications (Knight, *Shaksp. Studies*, p. 141 f.). Probably, therefore, if the piece was not one of Marlowe's own, it must have been written by one of his admirers and disciples, and, accordingly, have been written at a time when Marlowe was still the hero of the day, that is, somewhere about 1591–92. This conjecture is also shared by Dyce and Delius (See his *Einleitung* to Shakspeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, p. xiv.). The subject is probably derived from an anecdote related of Philip the Good of Burgundy, and reported by Heuterus *de rebus Burgundicis*, lib. iv., and occupies a place in the old English collection of amusing tales by Richard Edwards, which was printed in 1570. And yet a very similar story is told even of Chalif Harun al Raschid in the *Arabian Nights*. See also, G. H. Norton in the *Shakspeare Society's Papers*, ii. 2 f.; also Simrock, *l.c.* iii., 225 ff.

a portion of it has been lost; this is far from being impossible, as the drama was not printed till 1623, and several of the later prints of Shakspeare's plays were collected from the scrolls of the actors. It is probable, however, that Shakspeare did not add the termination of the prelude because it was sufficiently well known, not merely from the older 'Taming of a Shrew,' but also from other old pieces; for the same prelude is met with in several old English dramas of the Elizabethan period and seems to have been very popular with the theatrical public of the day. Criticism, however, has to regard the whole as a whole, and, accordingly, must here also endeavour to supply what is wanting. There exist two plays which, taken together, will furnish a safe point to start from. In the first place Holberg's *Jeppe vom Berge* which is constructed upon an exactly similar plan. We here have a peasant-lord who uses his power in so uncouth and intolerable a manner, who is so wholly ignorant of how to use his unaccustomed authority, and whose domineering spirit degenerates so completely into caprice and violence that a sleeping potion has speedily to be brought to him, in order that he may be cast back upon the dunghill to which he belongs. On awakening he looks upon all that has happened as a dream or a visit to paradise. A similar turn—and one that is poetically true—is taken by the older 'Taming of a Shrew' in the ending which it gives to the prelude. Even though this piece was certainly not—as Tieck thought—one of Shakspeare's youthful compositions, still it cannot be denied that it contains much that is good, and therefore, I think, it cannot seem surprising that Shakspeare in his play not only followed the course of the action step by step (it is only the intrigues of Bianca's lovers against one another that are his own invention), but that he has not unfrequently admitted into his text the same imagery and modes of expression, occasionally even whole lines of the old play; in short, that he has not actually composed a new drama, but remodelled the older one in his own fashion. In accordance with this supposition we may obviously assume that Shakspeare, although retaining, and essentially improving the old and favourite 'induc-

tion,' nevertheless did not care to repeat the well-known conclusion, either because he supposed that he might be allowed to leave the end to the imagination of the spectators, or (what seems to be more likely) because he considered the short ending to the old play good enough as it was, and therefore did not introduce it into his manuscript, but left it to the actors to reproduce it more or less freely. This hypothesis would also explain the change of the natural title of 'Taming of a Shrew' into the unnatural one of 'Taming of *the* Shrew,' inasmuch as Shakspeare meant thereby to refer to the older play and to say, 'Taming of *the* Shrew,' *well known from the older play*; and it, at the same time, throws light upon the circumstance (very remarkable when we bear in mind Shakspeare's usual care in remodelling and revising his plays) of his having left this play without a conclusion—a conclusion without which the groundlings would scarcely have been content, considering their doubtless great pleasure in the character and doings of Sly. But, in accordance with this, we shall also have to assume that Shakspeare's remodelling appeared at a time when the older play was still upon the stage. I therefore believe that the 'Tamyng of a Shrowe' which, according to Henslowe* was performed at the theatre in Newington, was not the older piece, but Shakspeare's play. This supposition is supported by the circumstance that in 1594 Shakspeare's company, together with the Lord Admiral's players, were then under Henslowe's direction, and played in Newington, and that the older 'Taming of a Shrew' belonged to neither of these two companies—as the title of the print intimates—but to the company of the Earl of Pembroke, and, accordingly, could not well have been given by Henslowe.

But the principal argument for my conjecture lies in the drama itself. It would unquestionably fall into two halves, in a very inartistic manner, were the connection between the 'induction' and conclusion only external and arbitrary, and not also internally and organically related to the centre, that is, to the play within the play. An artistic, organic connection is, however, not possible in this case,

* *Diary*, p. 36.

except by means of the unity in the fundamental idea of both. If the latter agrees with the unknown termination of the prelude then, at all events, the missing part has been correctly supplied, even though the poet himself should have conceived it otherwise. If, therefore, we assume that the end of the joke played upon the drunken tinker was similar to that in Holberg's comedy, then the prelude and the conclusion clearly express the not very deep maxim which we find in Holberg: that he who is born a peasant makes a bad lord and master. The same thought is at least intimated in the older 'Taming of a Shrew,' inasmuch as Sly, there, repeatedly interrupts the play that is being acted before him and, in his domineering mood, raises objections to the commands given by the Duke in the play, and besides this, drinks so much wine that he falls into a drunken sleep, and in this condition is carried by the lord's servants to the same spot whence they had brought him. If, however, we examine further into the leading and fundamental motive of the 'induction' and conclusion, we find there that conception of human life which is very well adapted for comic treatment, and which views it from the side of that almost unconquerable power which man's natural circumstances and inherent relations exercise upon him. The tinker-lord shows us, in a few, but life-like features, on the one hand, the folly and perversity into which man readily falls, when the path assigned to him by nature is torn from its proper track—whether it be with his consent or not—on the other hand, man's incapacity of maintaining himself in a sphere which lies beyond that allotted to him by nature. Sly, at the end of the older 'Taming of a Shrew,' considers his life as a lord to have been a mere dream, and all that happened to him there he has forgotten; his first words on awakening are 'more wine.' The only thing he remembers is, how to tame a shrew, his own wife being one; in other words, Sly is and remains a tinker, whether he drinks wine and sleeps in a feather bed, like a lord, or gets drunk on small beer and takes his night's rest on the naked earth, like a tinker.

The same meaning, however, evidently applies to the play within the play; we have the same fundamental

idea, the same view of life, except that it is here more clearly developed, and more fully worked out. As, in the first case, Sly, in spite of his imaginary splendour, always remains the tinker, falling asleep over the more refined enjoyments that are prepared for him, and makes no further use of his dignity as lord, than to get drunk, so in the principal play, Katharina, the haughty shrew who despises the natural vocation of woman, has stepped out of the sphere which nature had assigned to her, and hence, in her obstinacy, arrogance and love of dominion, commits acts of foolishness that are excusable only in a spoilt child. As, in the first case, the tinker's state of lordship terminates in the nothingness of a mere joke, and he, in the end, becomes what he really is, even though against his own will, so we find that the Shrew can, as little, maintain her assumed high position as uncontrolled mistress of the household; she, in the end, is cured by a device on the part of her husband, who, by displaying a much greater amount of the same perversity, holds up before her a reflex of her own distorted image; thus put to shame, she returns to her own proper sphere. The folly and perversity—the whole weight of which falls back upon her—naturally neutralise each other: the assumed perversity of Katharina's husband becomes the means of curing the actual disease of her mind. The play, at the same time, is based upon profound psychological observations: it is the trial of the homœopathic treatment in the domain of ethics, which, when properly carried out, is generally successful.

The subordinate parts of the play—the intrigues of Bianca's suitors against one another, the love affairs of Gremio, of Hortensio and the widow, of Lucentio and Bianca—are, as already remarked, but very loosely interwoven with the main action, and thus stand opposed to it in the form of a second, independent half. This is a defect which Shakspeare could, indeed, not very well have avoided unless he meant entirely to change the old play. And yet upon a closer examination there are nevertheless indications which point to the fundamental motive of the whole, and thus connect the subordinate portions with the principal part. A character like Katharina can be

accounted for only by her having received an entirely wrong education, and a false mode of treatment; the father of such a daughter must have wholly misunderstood his position as a father, and, in place of ruling his house with paternal strictness and manly authority, must have abandoned himself to effeminacy and weakness. And this is precisely what good old Baptista appears to have done, for although he makes no secret of his daughter's faults he does not even attempt to correct them. Vincentio also, to judge from the little we see of the development of his character, must have suffered from a similar weakness, otherwise Lucentio, his light-headed son, would not have so entirely forgotten all filial duty and respect towards him as to venture to pass off a ridiculous pedant as his own father, merely to promote his own interests; and Vincentio himself would not have permitted his son to be accompanied by servants equally inconsiderate of their position as servants. Gremio, the old suitor, is very rightly outwitted and made laughing-stock for forgetting his years and becoming the rival of a spirited youth for the love of a pretty girl. Lastly, Lucentio and Hortensio lose their wager against Petruchio, and are deservedly put to shame for perpetually playing the part of devoted and obsequious lovers, and thus losing sight of the seriousness of their position as men, and their dignity as husbands, accordingly, for having likewise placed themselves in a false and unbecoming position. Petruchio seems to be the only rational character in the whole piece; but the perversity of the others obliges him also to play the fool and to make himself ridiculous, although, finally, the laughing is completely on his side. All the other personages, except Petruchio and Katharina, are sketched with but a few touches, lightly and superficially; this is a defect that must ever remain a defect, even though the plan of the piece scarcely permitted of a more detailed and deeper delineation of character, and although the few touches are correct and to the point, and made by a skilful hand. There is but one trait in Katharina's character that might seem to be wrongly drawn, namely, that the self-willed, violent, refractory girl should so

quickly and readily consent to marry Petruchio, and that she obeys him almost without resistance, with, indeed, a nay on her lips, but a yea in her heart. However, upon a closer examination we shall again have to admit this to be a proof of the poet's thorough knowledge of human nature. It would unquestionably have been an easy matter to have given more obvious motives for Katharina's consent, but the best motive here was the very surprise, the irresistible impression made upon her by an energetic and thoroughly manly spirit. In Petruchio she probably, for the first time in her life, met with a man worthy the name of a man; hitherto she had been surrounded only by women in male attire. A genuine man she could not but esteem, nay even love, and accordingly obey. This, in fact, is the result of woman's nature in general, and the psychological result of the pride and unusual energy of her character. Petruchio and Katharina, therefore, are excellently suited to one another, and as the closing scene intimates, their marriage will prove a happy one. And herein again we find an indication of the fundamental idea of the whole: that only that which is natural, and in accordance with the nature of mankind and things, is enduring, and a guarantee of happiness and contentment.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

'THE Merchant of Venice' is one of the most popular creations of the great poet, and unites within itself all the charms of Shakspeare's poetry. In the first place let us consider the characterisation. Apart from the numerous other characters, which are as true to life as they are clearly and consistently developed, and which balance and set off one another in organic contrasts:—the noble, high-minded but passive and melancholy Antonio, who is little suited to bear the burden of an active, energetic life, and is so well described in the words 'a princely merchant';—his gay and sincere friend Bassanio, who is certainly somewhat frivolous, but amiable and intelligent, a true Italian *gentiluomo* in the best sense of the word;—his comrades Lorenzo and Gratiano;—further, Portia, who is no less amiable than she is intellectual, and her graceful maid Nerissa;—also Jessica, that child of nature, who loses herself in the enthusiasm of her Eastern passion of love—apart from all these firmly and accurately delineated characters, down to the silly Launcelot Gobbo and his childish old father, we have in Shylock, the Jew, a true masterpiece of characterisation.

Shylock is, in the first place, a very successful representation of the Jewish national character in general, not of that venerable, grand, even though one-sided spirit which animated the people in the days of Moses, David and the Prophets, but of that low, undignified, degenerate way of thinking into which the fallen people had sunk during the time of their dispersion over the face of the earth—those centuries of long persecution and sore oppression. Their grand endurance and steadfastness, their strict adherence to religion, custom and law, had during those times changed

into obstinacy and self-will; their shrewd intellect into finesse and a talent for speculative combinations; their enthusiasm for prophecy into superstition; their love of inheritance—which was in so far praiseworthy as it was united with a religious devotion to the land which God had given them, for which they themselves had fought hard, and maintained with trouble and anxiety—had gradually turned into covetousness, into mean, revolting avarice; their feeling of superiority over all other nations—from whom they were distinguished by a purer religious faith—had degenerated into bitter hatred and contempt, and heartless cruelty towards their persecutors. Nothing had escaped the universal degradation except that unconquerable perseverance, that dry mummy-like tenacity of the Jewish nature. Thus Shylock may be said to be the pitiful, decayed ruin of a grand past, the glimmering spark of a vanished splendour, which, although it can no longer give warmth and life, can nevertheless burn and destroy; we can as little deny him our sympathy, as we can repress our disgust at his sentiments and mode of action. And yet Shylock is not a mere Jew in the general sense; in him the Jewish national character appears, at the same time, to be represented in an entirely individual form, in full personal vividness and definiteness. Hatred and revenge, in him, are directed more especially against Christian merchants, who lend money without interest and security so as to help unfortunate debtors and to exercise charity and generosity; Shylock thinks himself thereby more oppressed than by the dog-like manner in which they treat him. For this reason the princely merchant Antonio is a very thorn in his sight. His hatred of him even surpasses his avarice, and he plays the part of a high-minded and generous character merely to work a dastardly trick upon him. He contrives with juristic shrewdness and legal knowledge to give this trick the semblance of lawfulness, and in the same way as he holds strictly to the Jewish law, he insists stubbornly upon the letter of the foreign law. Common-sense and shrewdness, in him, clothe themselves in the garb of that peculiarly subtle humour and cutting sarcasm of wit, which he has so freely at his command. Lastly, his love for his

daughter, whom he guards as the apple of his eye, and seeks to protect against the baneful influences of her surroundings, and his faithful attachment to the religion and customs of his ancestors, which he considers as more important than profit and honour, show us a couple of purely human motives, which, to some extent, moderate what is repulsive in his sentiments and mode of action. In describing special, personal features of this kind, not only is that which is general in the national character individualised, but that which would make him a caricature is likewise avoided; the man is saved by the element of humanity.*

Next to Shylock, Portia is the one amid all the other figures who stands in the fullest light of the foreground; it is not Antonio and Shylock, but, in reality, the latter and Portia, that are the principal parties in the strange lawsuit which forms the centre of the action. Mrs. Jameson, in her usual graceful and ingenuous way, has, with special care, given us a copy of the exquisitely beautiful original. I entirely agree with what she says in the following passage: 'Portia is endued with her own share of those delightful qualities, which Shakspeare has lavished on many of his female characters; but, besides the dignity, the sweetness and tenderness which should distinguish her sex generally, she is individualised by qualities peculiar to herself: by her high mental powers, her enthusiasm of temperament, her decision of purpose, and her buoyancy of spirit. These are innate: she has other distinguishing qualities more external, and which are the result of the circumstances in which she is placed.

* Some recent critics will not admit that Shylock's character possesses either this human trait or any national features and relations. According to them, Shakspeare's intention was to represent him as a monster of avarice, hatred and revengefulness, and to describe his Jewish nature only from a ludicrous and contemptible point of view, without any secondary conditions to lessen the bad impression, and to form some excuse for his actions. But is this like Shakspeare? Why does he make Shylock a Jew? Why does he so frequently make him complain loudly and bitterly of the injustice which his people have to endure from the Christians? Why does he so expressly emphasise his hatred, not merely of Antonio, but of Christians in general?

Thus she is the heiress of a princely name and countless wealth; a train of obedient pleasures have ever waited round her; and from infancy she has breathed an atmosphere redolent of perfume and blandishment. Accordingly there is a commanding grace, a high-bred, airy elegance, a spirit of magnificence in all that she does and says, as one to whom splendour had been familiar from her birth. She is full of penetrative wisdom, and genuine tenderness, and lively wit; but as she has never known want or grief, or fear or disappointment, her wisdom is without a touch of the sombre or the sad; her affections are all mixed up with faith, hope, and joy; and her wit has not a particle of malevolence or causticity.' In fact her wit is ever as graceful as it is poetic, a beneficent, warming fire, which, without doing harm, throws a brilliant light upon all surrounding objects. Notwithstanding her practical cleverness, we see at a glance that her hand has never touched the meanness of life; notwithstanding her noble birth, she is not in the remotest degree affected by any senseless aristocratic pride; and notwithstanding her great wealth, she is no way *blasé*, no withered hot-house plant, but free and fresh in spirit, joyous and pure in heart. She is in the full bloom of life, a rare, beautiful and fragrant flower in a luxurious garden, where the sunbeams of love have just unfolded her into a most perfect blossom. Her wealth and high birth serve only to adorn the noble, beautiful womanliness of her character with all the charms, all the splendour and glory that surround the aristocracy; she is noble in the highest sense of the word, because, at the same time, she is genuinely human and genuinely feminine. Portia, accordingly, forms the sharpest contrast to her opponent Shylock; in her we have the glory of birth and inherited possessions, in him the darkness of a low, despised descent, and masses of gold accumulated with difficulty; in her the wit of poetry and the intelligence of a free, highly-cultivated mind, in him the wit of malevolence, and the acuteness of practical shrewdness tutored by oppression and persecution; in her faith and hope, in him distrust and fear; in her love and devotion, gentleness and a spirit of forgiveness, in him hate, harshness, unmercifulness, and a thirst of revenge. It is round these two poles

that the dramatic action turns, and round which the other figures of the piece are grouped.

As we here have the most brilliant display of Shakspeare's masterly skill in characterisation, so his skill as regards the composition, the arrangement and the development of the complicated substance of the action is no less admirable. The invention, it is true, is not altogether his own; the greater part of it is taken from a novel of Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone* (which was written in 1378, but not printed till 1558), and the subject of this novel again was borrowed from the *Gesta Romanorum*, another part of which contains the principal features of the story of the three caskets, which, however, is different in point.* Still, these sources, and more especially the *Gesta Romanorum*, which probably Shakspeare alone made use of, would have furnished the poet with but a thin skeleton which he would have had to clothe with flesh and blood;† besides which, he has freely added several characters, and increased the complication by the introduction of a new episode. Accordingly we here find three strange and already complex knots wound one into another: first, the lawsuit between Antonio and Shylock; then Bassanio's courtship and that of the other three suitors' for Portia, and Gratiano's for Nerissa; lastly, Jessica's love for and elopement with Lorenzo. These manifold relations, actions and incidents, are arranged with such great clearness (the one developed out of and with the other) that we nowhere lose the thread, that every separate part is harmoniously connected with the other, and that, in the end, all is rounded off into an organic whole. Schlegel justly remarks that 'in the same way as the noble Antonio is made an agreeable contrast to the hateful Shylock, so we find that

* The *Gesta Romanorum* was translated into English by Robinson in 1577.—Compare Echtermeyer and Simrock, *l.c.* i. 145 f. iii. 183.—Collier's *Shakspeare's Library*, ii. No. 7.

† It may be that Shakspeare first became acquainted with part of the subject from the ballad of the Jew *Gernutus*, which is reprinted in Percy's *Relics of Ancient English Poetry*, and is probably older than Shakspeare's play. On the other hand, it is more than doubtful whether the old lost play which Stephen Gosson speaks of in his *School of Abuse* (1579) treated of the same subject, as Gervinus supposes. Compare Ch. Knight's *Studies of Shakspeare*, p. 229.

the lawsuit between them—which is indeed not absolutely unnatural, yet extremely unusual—has its counterpoise in the equally unusual courtship between Portia and Bassanio; the one is made probable by the other.' We may add that Portia's fate, owing to the obstinacy of her deceased father, appears bound to the decision of chance, and that, in contrast to this, her maid Nerissa voluntarily makes her own happiness dependent upon the fortune of her mistress; and that, again, their constrained will and inclinations form a decided contrast to Jessica's voluntary choice, which offends both law and right.

Thus even the external arrangement of the manifold situations exhibits that organic contrariety from which life and action everywhere proceed. The one remaining question is, where is the *internal unity* which—before the tribunal of criticism—can alone justify the combination of such heterogeneous elements in one drama? If we examine into this, it might seem that the play cannot but be disjointed, notwithstanding the skill exhibited in the external composition. An actual connection, by means of the thread of incidents, is indeed clearly enough set forth, for it is owing to Antonio's self-sacrificing readiness to comply with his friend's wishes that he falls into the Jew's clutches, and owing to Portia's wit and inventive genius that he is saved, and the course of the two other love intrigues are connected with these. But this bond is obviously, purely external, accidental; what, in its *inner, essential meaning*, has the unhappy lawsuit (which verges upon the tragic) to do with the gay, happy courtship of Bassanio and Portia? Such a purely external succession of heterogeneous elements can but increase the gap, and cannot, in fact, be taken into account; a drama that falls to pieces in such a manner cannot be considered a true work of art. The verdict of æsthetic criticism cannot be different as long as no inner, ideal relationship, no truly artistic and organic unity between the heterogeneous parts of the whole, is demonstrated.

In regard to the question as to where this unity is to be found, commentators disagree here more than in the case of most of Shakspeare's other dramas. And it certainly does, in the present case, seem as if the multifarious

elements of the action were of a strange and opposite kind of nature; therefore we cannot feel surprised that some critics (for instance, Kressig) should doubt whether the elements are combinable; and the details also assert themselves with so much decision, are so free and independent, stand out of the picture in so full and well-rounded a manner, that they involuntarily rivet the eye, and, so to say, lead captive the mind. Hence it becomes difficult to withdraw one's gaze from the graceful movements of the several figures, from the beautiful colouring and the lovely play of light and shade, in order to look for the invisible threads which run through, and hold all the several parts together. In the first place, as regards the lawsuit between Antonio and the Jew, there can, as I think, be scarcely any doubt that its meaning and significance coincides with the old juristic proposition: *Summum jus summa injuria*. Every one who knows the proposition, and its legal significance will unconsciously, when witnessing the celebrated trial scene, be struck with its applicability here. For the proposition merely maintains that an acknowledged and positive law turns into its opposite and becomes a wrong when carried to the extreme point of its limited nature and one-sided conception, and when driven to its extreme consequence. Shylock holds fast to the law: forbearance, gentleness, kindliness and all the lovely names which greet the happy on the threshold of life, and accompany them on their paths, he has never known; injustice, harshness, and contempt stood around his cradle, hate and persecution obstructed every step of his career. With convulsive vehemence, therefore, he clutches hold of the law, the small morsel of justice which cannot be withheld even from the Jew. This legal, formal, external justice Shylock obviously has on his side, but by taking and following it to the letter, in absolute one-sidedness, he falls into the deepest, foulest wrong, which then necessarily recoils ruinously upon his own head.

The same view of the dialectic and double-edged nature of justice, which is here set forth in its utmost subtilty is, however, I think, also exhibited in manifold lights and shades throughout the other parts of the play. The determination of Portia's father, which deprives her of all

participation in the choice of a husband, is indeed based upon paternal right, but this very right—even though justified by the best intentions of anxious affection—is again, at the same time, a decided wrong, and Portia has good reason for complaining (iii. 2):

‘O! these naughty times
Put bars between the owners and their rights.’

Who would have cast a stone at her, had she broken her vow and guided her well-beloved, amiable and worthy lover, by hints and intimations in making the right choice? The wrong, which is here again contained within what is in itself right, would have fallen with tragic force, had not accident—in the form of a happy thought, as in the case of the lawsuit—led to a happy result. Jessica’s flight and her marriage in opposition to her father’s will is, according to generally recognised principles, a flagrant wrong. And yet, who would condemn her for withdrawing herself from the power and the rights of such a father, of whom she is justly ashamed, and to obey whom truly is a matter of impossibility to her conscience and to her innocent heart? Here again, therefore, we find a point of right at strife with the demands of morality and asserting itself emphatically; Shakspeare himself brings it clearly enough forward in act ii. 3, and still more so in iii. 5, in the conversations between Launcelot and Jessica. The penalty which the court imposes upon the Jew, and by which he is compelled to sanction the marriage of his daughter with Lorenzo, also neutralises the conflicting elements more in an external and accidental manner than by true and internal adjustment. Lastly, right and wrong are no less carried to their extreme points, and consequently placed in a balancing state of uncertainty, in the quarrel between the two loving couples about the rings which they had parted with, in violation of their sworn promises; a scene with which the play closes. Here, again, we have a sufficiently distinct reflex of the proposition, *Summum jus summa injuria*; here again right and wrong are brought to such straits, are driven to such extremes, that the two are no longer distinct, but pass over directly one into the other.

Thus we see that the meaning and significance of the many, apparently, heterogeneous elements are united in one point; they are but variations of the same theme. Human life itself is conceived as a great lawsuit, and justice as the foundation and centre of all existence. This is the point of view from which the drama starts. And yet this foundation, the more it is built upon, the more unsafe and groundless it proves itself to be; this centre, the firmer and more decisively it is regarded as the nucleus of the whole, the more superficial and eccentric it appears. No doubt the end of law and justice ought to be to maintain and support human life. But they do not form the base and centre, they do not include the full value, or the whole truth of human existence. When conceived in so one-sided a manner they, on the contrary, neutralise each other and all life as well; right becomes wrong, and wrong right. Law and justice form, rather, but a single side of the whole. Their validity does not rest in and with themselves, but upon the higher principle of morality, from which they radiate but as single rays. Man, in and of himself, has no rights whatever, but duties only; he is, in reality, born only with duties, not with rights. And yet his duties—when opposed to those of others—are also his rights, and there is no true, living right, that is not at the same time a duty itself, or which involves some duty. No one, however, is *absolutely* capable of doing his duty; no one, consequently, has absolute justice on his side. Justice, therefore, must be accompanied by mercy, that is, by fairness, indulgence and clemency, wherein love manifests itself; and it is only when combined with love—the foundation of morality—that justice is truly and fully entitled to consideration. Accordingly life is not based upon what is right, but upon *love* and *mercy*; love, with its indulgence and clemency, is the higher stage above what is just, and up to which man has to rise, because he cannot remain standing upon the stage of what is just. This is intimated by Shakspeare in the beautiful lines in act iv. 1:

‘But mercy is above the sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God’s

When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this—
That in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.'

However, owing to the continual prevalence of immorality, owing to the perpetual attempts of men to evade their duty, to annoy and to do injury to others, that which is right must be distinguished from free morality, must be legally defined and degraded into compulsory law. The result of making this distinction is, that the dead letter of the law comes to rule, and that, not only does that which is right—at its extreme point—turn into what is wrong, but that, often enough, the wrong is sanctioned by public opinion, by custom and dogma, laws and institutions, and becomes an established right. This sanctioned wrong is the shield which protects Shylock's actions, and which, to a certain extent, excuses his hard-heartedness, his hate and his thirst for revenge. This sanctioned wrong turns the noble, generous and sympathetic Antonio, into a hard-hearted, deluded hater of Jews, and fills him with aversion to and contempt for the whole race; he considers himself justified in treating a man (who has never offended him) like a dog, in spitting upon his beard, and in spurning him with his foot. This sanctioned wrong fetters Portia's will, and deprives her of that right which is the most important to every human being, because the weal or woe of a whole life is dependent upon it. This sanctioned wrong, when looked at from a different point, excuses Lorenzo for robbing the Jew of his daughter, and the daughter for having eloped from her father, and for having gone off with his ducats. Accordingly, it may be said with equal truth—for it is, in reality, but a different turn of the same thought—that Shakspeare intended to represent this changeable, broken, two-fold nature of right, in its influence on the character and the sentiments of mankind, as well as on the formation of the conditions and relations in the various domains of life. And if we would trace the leading thought, the fundamental motive of the composition, further still, down to its very base and origin, it might be

said that the poem moves on the foundation of the great contrast between appearance and reality, between deceptive, hypocritical form and true substance; a contrast which pervades the world in all possible shapes, and is here set forth more especially in the contradiction in the nature of right itself, as right in wrong and wrong in right. This contrast between the formal and the real, between mere apparent right and actual right, is the basis upon which Shylock raises his criminal design, and is also the means by which it is frustrated by Portia's shrewdness; it is expressed in the ominous determination that binds Portia's fate to the selection made by her suitors between the three caskets; it constitutes the right and wrong in Jessica's mode of action as well as in the dispute about the parting with the rings. It is this same contrast to which Bassanio refers in his meditative remarks on the deceptive appearance of gold and silver compared with the simple, unpromising lead; his correct perception, however, guides him in making the right choice, whereas the want of this perception—the love of appearance—misleads the Princes of Arragon and Morocco. It is the same contrast which is set forth in the conduct of Antonio's friends, and distinguishes true friendship from that parasitical, false friendship which would leave a friend in misfortune (like Salanio and Salarino). Lastly, it is the sharpness of this same contrast, the far-reaching power of deceptive appearance, which has robbed the princely merchant of all his pleasure in life, and plunged him into a state of melancholy and apathy. This, it is true, is intimated but gently—for owing to his soft, self-sacrificing, sensitive nature, he has only a vague feeling, no clear consciousness of it—but he nevertheless does intimate it, when saying (i. 1):

‘I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;
A stage, where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.’

His foreboding mind tells him that he will one day fall between the extremes of this contrast. Accordingly, all the dramatic characters, all the agents and elements of the action, appear more or less affected by the weight of this contrast, the manifold forms of which are reflected in the

chief incidents of the action, but the main emphasis of which lies, nevertheless, in its legal form, in the *Summum jus summa injuria*.

Objection has been raised against this drama, inasmuch as it has been supposed that the scene in court, with its tragic seriousness, is inappropriate with the cheerful colouring of the whole; that the treatment of the Jew, especially his being compelled to become a Christian, is offensive to the feelings, and disturbing to the state of mind into which the play has thrown us—that, therefore, it remains a matter of doubt as to which species of drama this play ought to belong. But Shakspeare, as I think, has clearly enough intimated that he does not in any way consider Shylock a tragic character. Shylock's conduct, in general, makes rather a decidedly comic impression, and particularly in the scene of the outburst of his sorrow and rage at the elopement of his daughter and the loss of his ducats, which alternates in the sharpest contrast with his diabolical expressions of joy at the losses experienced by Antonio. His very behaviour in the trial scene has somewhat the flavour of comedy, because his whole being, his appearance, his manner of expressing himself in word and gesture, are obviously described intentionally in such a way as always to verge upon caricature. And if the punishment which overtakes him is, nevertheless, offensive to our finer feelings, we must bear in mind that the scene of the play is laid in the sixteenth century, and that Shylock forfeits our pity owing to his inhuman, almost devilish wickedness and hardness of heart, and has lost all claim to humane treatment. Moreover, owing to the desultory, irregular manner in which the sentence is pronounced, we feel that it is doubtful whether all the points will be strictly adhered to.

That Shakspeare himself intended the piece to be regarded as a comedy is attested, not only by its being included among his comedies by Heminge and Condell (in the first part of the folio edition), but especially by the fifth act in the play itself, which follows directly upon the trial scene. This last act has been considered a superfluous appendage hobbling in, in a spiritless manner, after all the interest has evaporated. But those who judge

the scene in this way have not understood the poet's intention. This act—in form and substance—is, in fact, absolutely necessary for the external and internal rounding-off of the whole. It not only entirely effaces any tragic impressions that may have been left by the fourth act, but all dissonances, all harsh discords are resolved into the purest harmony. The gay, graceful dalliance of happy and genuine love puts an end to the sharp contrasts between right and wrong, between appearance and reality, between the spirit and the letter; they neutralise each other because they cannot exist in face of truth and love, which are the true anchorage of human life. As previously the tragic sorrow—which is a part of Antonio's fate—was everywhere described in the softest colours, and the bitterness appeared clothed in the form of that peaceful, gentle, submissive sadness, into which Antonio's melancholy resolves itself (which clearly enough gives us a glimmer of the happy issue), so the last act most distinctly gives the piece its comic stamp, and playfully puts a mask over its serious character. We cannot but admire the artistic skill of the poet who, while apparently violating the rules of his art, and thus in danger of being accused by the multitude of failure of effect, nevertheless pursued his object so steadily and consistently, and attained it so surely.

Equally untenable is the accusation that the clown of the piece, Launcelot Gobbo, with his silly jokes, is inappropriate with the spirit and meaning of the whole, and that he stands opposed to the tragic seriousness which forms a part of the main action, or that, to say the least, he is a superfluous character. But he is neither the one nor the other. The clown is here, not only in his right place, but necessary, in so far as in most of Shakspeare's comedies he is the comic representative of the fundamental idea itself; he exhibits it in his own person, and it is, so to say, concentrated in his apparently personal doings and actions, and hence he represents it directly in the most vivid manner possible; he *parodies* it, at the same time, and thus shows that the whole piece is based upon the comic view of life. Look but a little more closely at the delightful humour in which he balances the right and wrong in regard to the question as to whether he ought or ought not to run off

from his master, Shylock the Jew, perpetually quizzing the question itself (ii. 2); and again when he plays the judge over Jessica and Lorenzo (iii. 5). It is only in these two scenes that he is in some measure brought forward, and accordingly, it is only from them that his significance for the whole can be judged; he has not scope enough to exhibit the further development of this significance of his character, or of his own individuality. But as far as the organism of the work of art would admit, Shakspeare has employed him to set forth the main substance of the fundamental thought.

Moreover 'The Merchant of Venice' must have been written before 1598, as it is mentioned by Meres. Hence it belongs to the first decade of Shakspeare's artistic labours, and has, most probably, to be assigned to the year 1597; this is also the opinion of Chalmers and Drake, and with them of Tieck and others. Malone, who places it in 1598, without giving any reason, does not appear to have considered that if it had been written in that year it could not well have been mentioned by Meres. The oldest print, in two different quartos, belongs to the year 1600. It is astonishing what progress Shakspeare had made in these few years, when we compare this play with the 'Two Gentlemen of Verona,' or with 'The Comedy of Errors.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR. TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

I CLASS these two pieces together, and remove them out of the ideal connection into which I have attempted to arrange Shakspeare's other comedies, because, it seems to me, that as regards character they are entirely different from the others. For instance, they are the only comedies in which Shakspeare has made use of satire, and therefore, in my opinion, they must be looked upon as satirical dramas. The idea of the comic does, it is true, itself contain the satirical element, and in so far comedy is always satirical as well, but satirical in the wider and more general sense. It is objective satire that makes itself felt in comedy, inasmuch as comedy ridicules *itself* as the representation of human weaknesses and perversities, and makes human life in general ludicrous as a world of contradictions and absurdities. Such general, objective satire, however, is not satire in its *narrower* and *actual* meaning. This, in all cases, can be met with only where ridicule attaches itself to the personal tendency of the poet, not to the thing itself. Now a drama cannot exhibit the subjective tendency in a *direct* manner, for the drama is that very form of poetical art which wholly excludes the poet's personal intervention. (The poet can at most—as in the parabasis of the Aristophanic comedy—place himself between the play and the spectator in the form of some *assumed* personality, a proceeding which will increase the satirical tendency, but at the cost of the dramatic form.) Hence satire, in accordance with the nature of dramatic art, must always assert itself only *indirectly*; the tendency of the poet must not shine forth from the background of the representation except as from beneath a veil, or must be so intimately connected with the subject that it appears to belong to it. The more subtly, therefore, the satirical element is con-

veiled, and the more that which—owing to its definite subjective tendency—is always inartistic and exists rarely without a disagreeable flavour, disappears behind the general significance of the representation, the finer and more poetically perfect is the satire. And in this respect we shall again have to admire the masterly skill with which Shakspeare has contrived so ingeniously to veil his satire, that we only have the reflex, not the direct exhibition of it.

1. THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

The very cause which gave rise to the composition of 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' intimates at once that this play is different in character from the poet's other works. As far as we know, it is the only one of Shakspeare's dramas that does not owe its origin to the free inclination of his poetic genius, but, to an outward instigation. According to an indeed unauthenticated report,* Queen Elizabeth is said to have expressed the wish to see the doughty Sir John Falstaff—whom she had learned to know and esteem in 'Henry IV.'—represented in love. Shakspeare is said to have thereupon written the piece in a fortnight, which in my opinion is as little unlikely as the above wish of the Queen.† This supposition would, on the one hand, explain the different character of the drama, and the hasty and sketchy appearance which it exhibits, notwithstanding the re-

* See vol. i. 219.

† The tradition, although from a late source, gains considerably in probability, if the old quarto of 1602 (republished by Halliwell in his already mentioned *First Sketch of Shakspeare's Merry Wives of Windsor*) be somewhat more closely examined, and compared with the reprint of the piece in the folio edition. In all probability the quarto is one of those 'piratical editions,' to which so many old quartos belong. But its deviations from the text of the folio, are throughout so important and yet generally so Shakspearian in character, that—as Halliwell and Knight justly maintain—they cannot be explained as mere oversights and misunderstandings, omissions and alterations of the copyist. Probably, therefore, the quarto edition is founded upon the piece in its original form, a shorter and more carelessly finished work, which Shakspeare had written as a hurried sketch; whereas the text of the folio gives a later remodelling, which, however, would not have entirely done away with the original character of haste and carelessness.

modelling it probably received at a later day; would account for the loose external connection in which the main action—Falstaff's love-affairs—stands with the secondary parts—the affair between Dr. Caius and the Welsh parson, the loves of Fenton and Anne Page, the horse-stealing, etc.;—further would account for the want of a careful and detailed delineation of the characters (who appear too little individualised, drawn too much like genre-pictures, and in many instances verge upon caricatures), and for the wearisome repetition of Falstaff's unlucky courtships (which are always interrupted in the same manner); in short, would account for the want of the thorough working-out of the details. On the other hand, Falstaff's individuality is, throughout the piece, silently assumed to be well known; the 'merry wives' alone, would obviously not have sufficed to make the character intelligible, the less so as the drama is also distinguished by the fact that it is the only one of Shakspeare's comedies where the whole play is, so to speak, staked upon *one* throw which is played by the one person of Falstaff. In fact, Falstaff is the bearer of the whole action, the centre round which everything turns; without him and his individuality the whole drama would have no meaning. For the story of the love and marriage of Mistress Anne Page is evidently but a kind of by-play, in Shakspeare's usual style; we have seen in various instances that he is fond of exhibiting the fundamental thought which guided him in planning a drama in a number of variations, in the most different kinds of subjects, and in appropriate modifications. Besides, this love-affair does not even possess an independent course of development; it is but a simple situation, the relation of one girl to several suitors, which, without internal development, without any actual history, merely contains two moments, the beginning and the end. Moreover, the principal moment—the end—although introduced by a special intrigue, appears, nevertheless, only woven into the result of Falstaff's own love adventures. Thus in this case, also, Falstaff and his fortunes again step into the foreground; in fact, he is the lever of the dramatic action, the centre of the whole play.

Hence it will be all the more necessary to give a fuller

and more careful delineation of this character—both as we have him portrayed by Shakspeare here and in ‘Henry IV.’—than we shall offer of any of the other personages. It is only a careful analysis of Falstaff’s character that can decide the question as to whether, and how far, this single figure is justified in being the bearer of a whole dramatic poem. And he deserves this examination, if only from the fact that Shakspeare has treated him with unmistakable partiality, and worked his character out with more care and more in detail than is the case with any others of his comic figures.

Two features strike us at a glance as being clear and prominent in Falstaff’s character; on the one hand, his great wealth of wit, his inexhaustible store of happy devices, plots and pranks, and the indestructibility of his good humour; on the other hand, his equally great amount of sensuality, love of pleasure and excessive carnal lusts. The *point de vue* of his life, and the centre upon which all his aims and actions turn, is, that his wit, his inventive talents, and his shrewdness shall in all cases furnish him with the means of gratifying his sensual desires, and protect him in case of need. Enjoyments of every description he must have; and it is only a good joke, a successful piece of mischief—to him the greatest of all enjoyments—that he thinks even more attractive than a glass of sack and the charms of Dolly Tear-sheet. Falstaff is the most consummate epicurean, in the form of a knight of Shakspeare’s day but—owing to a halo of ingenious and irresistible wit, and an ideal mental freedom, which humourously disregard all difficulties, and even the whole seriousness of life—an epicurean who appears to a certain extent spiritualised, sublimated into a sort of poetical ideal, which raises him far above the usual run of common rakes, and prevents moral indignation from casting its judgment upon him. Falstaff does not possess any great passions, because to gratify them would cost him too much trouble, and afford an indeed great, but after all only a passing enjoyment. He has also nothing in common with actual wickedness and gross crimes and vices, because the former undermine their own enjoyment, and also because they are inseparably connected with hate; moreover, great crimes

are accomplished only with trouble and exertion, and are always followed by a dread of punishment; gross vices, lastly, necessarily blunt and deaden the sense of enjoyment. Neither is he at all jealous or envious—for envy is its own tormentor—he is more inclined to be glad to see others enjoying themselves, and even helps his boon-companions in attaining their desires, as long as these do not cause himself any inconvenience or annoyance. But as regards the lesser sins, such as bragging, lying and deceiving, he is not over-particular, and has even no great objections to a little thieving, when it can be done easily, and especially when connected with some good joke. He trusts to his wit to save him from any unpleasant consequences of such *bagatelles*; such things he considers natural and unavoidable because he cannot find any enjoyment or procure the means of any enjoyment without them. If this were possible he would rather not be guilty of a single transgression, except as a joke, and even though not altogether good and virtuous, still he would like—without a struggle, however—to be upright and honest. It is true he likes virtue even less than vice, because it demands a greater amount of energy, and, worst of all, self-denial and self-control. He does not believe in virtue; he thinks it a delusive piece of sophistry, a mere illusion to suppose that any one should give up enjoyment and pleasure against the instincts of nature, in order to obtain so-called true happiness. To him, therefore, virtue, like honour, is a mere ‘word,’ a thing that no one possesses, that has ‘no skill in surgery,’ but at most is an honour to the dead who are insensible to it; hence a mere ‘scutcheon,’ so ‘he’ll none of it.’ And yet, at the same time, he knows very well that he must appear to possess certain virtues such as bravery, honesty, and above all things honour and authority; for without the appearance of these he would find it impossible to live. Accordingly his wit and shrewdness have here again to come to his aid, together with his consummate impudence. In the same way as his inventive genius is inexhaustible when wanted to help him out of scrapes, and other difficulties, so the manner in which he contrives to impose upon blockheads and simpletons is inimitable. And as the aim

of his existence, in a double sense, has so wholly become flesh and blood, and is steadily pursued by him, so, in spite of all obstacles, he in most cases succeeds in attaining his object. The result of this is a captivating *nonchalance* and naturalness, and an imposing amount of self-confidence.

These are the most essential features of Falstaff's individuality. But such a delineation does not throw sufficient light upon the artistic significance of a character who is made the bearer of a whole work of art, does not answer the question as to his being poetically entitled to this eminent distinction. Falstaff's character verges closely upon caricature, yet without ever exceeding the boundary-line of reality. To judge from his inner nature he is an *ideal* character, and yet possesses so much life and freshness, and is so like reality, that we feel as if we had already met him; he keeps so close to the fine demarcation between what is general and individual, between ideal and real, that he appears a true mean between both, where the above contrasts are fused into an organic unity. It is just this, however, that makes him, as an individual figure, a *plastico-poetical* work of art. He differs from ordinary dramatic characters, inasmuch as the latter, although likewise ideal personages in the same sense as himself, nevertheless possess and develop their ideality only in an artistic connection with all the other personages of the drama, and thus represent as integral *moments* of the *whole*, what Falstaff's character is *in and of itself alone*. He is, so to say, the symbol, the personification of that general state of human frailty, which, without being actually wicked, that is, without doing evil for the sake of evil, in order to find satisfaction in it, nevertheless perpetually does evil, (to a certain extent against his will,) simply because it happens to be the most direct means of attaining what he calls life and happiness; this, he believes, is not only actually aimed at by everyone, but ought to be allowed to be the aim of everyone. In so far Falstaff is a pure child of nature, and it cannot be denied that in 'Henry IV.' at least, he shows some sparks of that *naïveté*, gay humour and innocent good nature, which is generally peculiar to so-called children of nature; but he is a child of nature who

not only stands in the midst of a many-sided and advanced state of civilization, but who—owing to the refined luxury of his enjoyments, the variety of his dissolute appetites, and the manifold devices he makes use of to gratify them—is, at the same time, the impersonation of the whole of this refined and artificial civilization. The result of this, however, is that, on the one hand, his personality contains a contradiction which in itself serves the poet as a means for producing comic effects; on the other hand, the general human frailty which is personified in him, receives an individual character, and an actual relation to the special age in which he lives and of which he himself is a reflex in the concave mirror of comedy.

And yet this undeniable ideality and self-contained independence of his character would still not give him any full right to be the exclusive bearer of a dramatic action; this ideal basis could not of itself alone form the basis of a drama, of a comedy. The other and necessary postulate is supplied by another and special feature in Falstaff's character. For he is not only *not* fond of what is actually wicked, vulgar and low, but we even find that he possesses a germ of nobleness, a small and faint spark of true nobility such as surrounds all Shakspeare's principal figures. This is distinctly evident when we compare him with his associates Bardolph, Nym, Pistol, etc., and also when we recall to mind the significant account of his death in 'Henry V.' (ii. 3). On his bed of mortal sickness he invokes woe upon sack and women, turns his thoughts to God, smiles upon his finger ends, plays with flowers and babbles of green fields; and even though Mrs. Quickly's words, that he 'went away an' it had been any christom child,' are as exaggerated as they are ludicrous, still we at all events see that the original germ of good in him was not altogether stifled; in his last moments it bursts forth and seeks to develop itself. In fact, such a lump of sensuality and love of pleasure could not afford us any true amusement—in spite of all his freedom of spirit, his humour and wit—did not a gentle, vague feeling in the concealed existence of a nobler germ, and in the continual but ever repressed contradictions of his better self against his frailty, perpetually speak to us

in his favour. That which arouses *mere* contempt, can never amuse. But our contempt is aroused not merely by unmitigated vulgarity, or by low selfishness and wickedness, but even by the most ideal freedom of the spirit, the most delightful irony of humour, if these are wholly *devoid* of a moral nucleus, and *merely* free from the *serious, ideal* interests in life, and consequently the more slavishly bound to their common sensual desires. Besides this, a man wholly sunk in carnal lusts, a mind so completely wanting in every higher interest that it cannot even obtain access to its own conscience, would be untrue to nature, a pure fiction; as long as man is man, he has some nobility of soul which can never be wholly effaced, and consequently possesses a substratum of good.

It is upon the basis of this better nature that Falstaff's clear *consciousness* of self is founded, and this never entirely forsakes him. In fact, his sensual desires, and the efforts of his mind to gratify them, are not only perpetually at strife with his love of comfort and his fear of the disagreeable consequences of his mischief; not only do his several weaknesses often fall into contradiction with one another, and with his plans, thus thwarting one another in turn, but they are, at the same time, continually wrecked on his own better consciousness of self, which is quite aware of them, and yet is always overcome by them. This is the source of the best part of his wit, it furnishes him with an inexhaustible fund of material for ridiculing himself, and for making the most amusing observations on his virtuous impulses, his pangs of conscience and his good intentions, the loss of his innocence, the corrupt state of the world, and the power of temptation. In short, the strange double-tongued soliloquies which Falstaff perpetually carries on with himself, the sophistry with which he deceives himself, the ironical manner in which he invariably speaks of himself and of the whole world, and on the other hand the manner in which his moral weaknesses are perpetually paralysing one another, are of themselves the most vivid representation of the idea of the comic. Falstaff's character, in fact, is thereby made the direct expression of the comic view of life, the reflex of the peculiar nature of comedy.

It is this alone that appears to justify Falstaff's being the central point, the factotum of a whole dramatic work of art. The irresistibly comic power of his nature does not merely lie in his overpowering wit and humour, not merely in the obvious contrast between the quickness of his mind and his huge unwieldy body—which, as the consequence of his immoderate love of pleasure, also disturbs and lessens all pleasures—not merely in the sight of the amusing struggle of his own weaknesses with the lusts and follies of the other dramatic characters, but above all, in the fact that his weak points find their constant enemy in himself, and are ever at strife with one another, casting irony upon and paralysing one another.

It is obvious at a first glance that a character like Falstaff could never be actually in love—the state in which his Royal admirer wished to see him depicted. To represent him in love, would, in fact, be to write a satire upon him, and would prove itself a satire by supposing that as real, which in him is a radical impossibility. This inner psychological impossibility is, however, not removed by the old sinner's love being in truth a mere piece of hypocrisy to cover his designs upon the purses and flesh-pots of the two husbands. For it is no less psychologically impossible that Falstaff, who is so clearly conscious of his own personal appearance, could ever have seriously imagined himself able to carry out his part, and to inspire any woman—much less the wives of the honest citizens—with any love for himself. What, therefore, are we to say when we see that Falstaff not only actually entertains this inconceivable illusion, but even fancies that the behaviour of Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford shows familiarity and inviting advances, which first induced him to play the lover to them (i. 3). This is obviously the impossible in its highest climax. Therefore, either the Falstaff we have in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' is not the one we met in 'Henry IV.' or the whole piece is based upon a psychological misconception. In fact, if Shakspeare wished to fulfil the wish of his Royal patron, he had but the alternative, either of committing a psychological error, or, of essentially altering Falstaff's character, and of causing the better side of his nature and his clear consciousness of

self, to step into the background. Shakspeare has preferred the latter course. The soliloquies and the reflections which Falstaff so frequently indulges in about himself and his life in 'Henry IV.,' are almost wholly wanting in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor.' In like manner his wit, also, lacks that *naïveté* and absence of purpose upon which it is there founded, and is also wanting in the fine, ingenious irony with which he there treats all persons and relations. In short, Falstaff's whole character is exhibited more from its coarse, common and material side, and he is also provided with a dose of conceit, self-sufficiency and delusion, which degrades him into a mere fool.

And yet, even though the psychological misconception is thus avoided, another defect rises up in its place. For, on the one hand, the character is and remains the same Falstaff whom we met in 'Henry IV. ;' the poet himself assumes that we are acquainted with the character. We are forced to think of the friend and boon companion of young Henry V. in his mischievous doings. On the other hand, however, when Falstaff is regarded apart from this inner contradiction in his nature, apart from his clear consciousness of self, and apart from the irony with which he treats himself and all the world, he is not fully entitled to be the exclusive bearer of the whole action. Accordingly, there is a defect in the drama, and I think that, for this very reason, we may safely infer that the idea of the piece was not Shakspeare's own, but that he wrote the play only in consequence of an outward instigation, from a kind of outward necessity.

If, however, we for once admit the impossible supposition that Falstaff could fall into the delusion of being still able to seduce honest wives, then our drama will not, as has been often thought, appear as unworthy of being placed by the side of those master-pieces of comedy which Shakspeare produced in the zenith of his activity as a poet; nay, we may say that it is pre-eminently a comedy in the narrower sense. In other words, the play is comic throughout, written with a gaiety and humour and furnished with a wealth of comic figures, such as is rarely met with. Besides this, it is a comedy of intrigue in which the com-

plication is loosely and lightly ravelled, but as smoothly unravelled, and interesting in spite of its simplicity. The composition also, although externally a series of loosely connected scenes and characters, exhibits internally as clear a harmony in the elements brought together, as is only to be found in those of Shakspeare's works belonging to the time of the fullest maturity of his genius. However, this assertion—that is, the internal ideal unity and finish of the whole, which we have just maintained—may have to be still more accurately established and demonstrated.

In the first place, the very basis and plan of the piece shows us that good Sir John is about to experience a terrible defeat: as a lover Falstaff can exist only with disgrace. And yet the triumph of simple honesty over the attacks and temptations of an old rake—which in reality are no temptations,—is in itself neither comic nor poetical. Hence the poet had, even for the sake of the comic effect, to give the virtue assailed not only a touch of lightness, but likewise a goodly portion of roguishness, of good humour, and a love for mischievous tricks. Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford are therefore pre-eminently *merry* wives. But even this would not have been sufficient for constructing, on the given basis, a comedy in Shakspeare's style. To effect this, it was above all things requisite that, not only Falstaff himself, but that all his opponents, all the dramatic characters—as citizens in the *perverted* world of comedy—should appear more or less subject to the same human weaknesses and follies which are personified in Falstaff. This alone could produce that play of humour and caprice, of senseless plans and intentions, of ideas and accidents, in which not one of the personages appears in the right, and by which all are more or less governed, and, accordingly, have to take upon themselves a portion of the ludicrous. Thus only could the aim of the dramatic representation—to excite a truly comic spirit in the mind of the spectator—be effected. Hence all the dramatic personages—the jealous Ford, the empty-headed Shallow (who is merely puffed up with ridiculous conceit), the lank and utterly foolish Slender, the merry fantastic Welsh parson (the reason of whose existence is only to show that even the clerical

dignity is no protection against the power of the comic), the French doctor, who is as vain as he is ridiculous, the good, true-hearted sensible Page, and his equally good and sensible wife (who, however, deceive each other in order to force their daughter into an unnatural marriage, and are finally as readily deceived as the gossiping host is cheated out of his horses)—all of these opponents of Falstaff, as well as his boon companions Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol, occasionally show a lesser degree of weakness and perversity, but also a far smaller amount of mind and wit than the amorous knight himself. In the end they are all bamboozled and ridiculed, and, moreover, in the very point in which each one thinks himself the strongest and most secure: Shallow, the country justice, in his pride of birth and official dignity, Slender in his knightly amiability, Mr. and Mrs. Page in their well-devised plans about their daughter, Ford in the jealous manner in which he rules wife and house, the host in his boasted cunning, and lastly, the parson and doctor in their love of dispute and their arrogance; all their foolish plans end equally in disgrace, and thus all meet with the same fate that befalls Falstaff.

Opposed to characters so much weaker in mind and wit than himself, Falstaff ought, in accordance with the poetical justice which prevails in the sphere of comedy, to have come off victorious. The fact of his nevertheless being defeated, and of his opponents triumphing over him—although not by obtaining their own special objects—is the result of his being untrue to himself, and, not merely committing a fault, but an act of inconceivable *stupidity* in appearing as a lover. His opponents obviously show more wisdom by remaining in their own peculiar spheres, whereas Falstaff quits his and descends into the sphere of the narrow-minded but honest burgher class, where he can gain neither esteem nor catch fish in his own fashion. Common practical wisdom, however, is a main power in the world of comedy. On the other hand, he no doubt has on his side the force of wit, that is, the other main power of the comic world, but not wholly, only partially. In 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' he lacks that innocent disinterested wit which is fond of a joke for a joke's sake. This species of wit is on his opponent's side

and is the chief weapon in the hands of the women whom he intends to deceive with his crafty, intentional wit.

This cluster of circumstances—the arrangement of the dramatic personages, the determining the characters and their relations to one another, which occasion the course of the events, the plan and the development of the various counter-intrigues—naturally contains the leading thought which floated before the poet's mind, the ideal unity which animates the organism of the drama. Shakspeare, in all of his comedies conceives life, it is true, only from its comic point of view; the action in every one of them is developed only by those means that belong peculiarly to comedy. Yet our present drama is specially wanting in the admixture of serious elements and relations—the love between Fenton and Anne Page, which is supposed to be serious, withdraws to the background and does not lead to any serious conflict—the whole moves throughout in the domain of the laughable. Moreover, the main things that set and keep the action in motion are, on the one hand, Falstaff's intriguing wit, and, on the other, the harmless gay humour of the Merry Wives; and by the side of these main levers, we have the pranks and mischief which the other characters, as secondary agents, play upon one another (Mine Host of the Garter upon Dr. Caius and the Welsh person, Mrs. Ford upon her jealous husband, and Fenton and Anne Page upon her parents and suitors). In these secondary parts of the action also, that which is right and rational, that which ought actually to have happened from the very beginning, is accomplished by a merry intrigue upon the conflicting plans of senselessness, and this intrigue affects the persons concerned more in the form of banter than of injury. Nay, in the most prominent secondary part (the intrigue which turns upon Anne Page), the two unlucky suitors, whose love is likewise mere semblance, are also deceived about the aim of their desires, and moreover by the object of their suit herself; thus, in this drama also, the external subject appears closely connected with the main action. Throughout the play we have wit and humour, banter and mischief, acting and working as the real levers of the action, as the

motives of the dramatic development. And, in so far, it can be said that the poet here represents life from that side from which it, indeed, always appears the consequence of human weakness, folly and perversity, but which at the same time, owing to the power of ridicule, of joke and jest which it has at its command, possesses a means of protecting itself against the consequences of that folly and perversity, and of ultimately bringing everything back into its right groove.

This cloak of merry banter—in which each character tries to make fun of and to ridicule the other, but in which all, and especially Falstaff, at the same time, make themselves ridiculous, and thus promote what is right and rational—in my opinion, however, conceals a satirical tendency in the narrower sense. For I think that it was also Shakspeare's intention to describe the chivalry and the gallantry of his day from its weak side, and to expose it to the ridicule of all sensible persons. It is a well-known fact that chivalry had begun to decline ever since the fifteenth century. We need only recall to mind the luxurious masquerades, the empty pomp and ostentation into which it had already degenerated at the court of the Burgundian Kings, more especially at that of Charles V. Its religious and moral seriousness, and the spirit and significance in which it had originated, had vanished; it was then little more than a piece of pageantry, a hollow fantastic piece of formality; and after that period gradually approached its dissolution, and exhibited different forms of degeneracy in different countries. While the Spanish grandees of the sixteenth century fell into those follies which are lashed by Cervantes in his 'Don Quixote,' the more practical and yet poetical nature of Englishmen turned more to external luxury, trials of strength and games of all descriptions, and various kinds of extravagances accompanied with fantastic adventures. This is attested by individual features preserved by history of the manner in which the young English aristocracy spent their lives; nay, we need only recall the kind of festivities that were given by the barons of the kingdom, when the Queen honoured their estates with a visit. In Falstaff's character we have a successful, but somewhat caricatured

portrait of that senseless form of chivalry which loses itself in extravagance and love of enjoyment; he is the satirical extract, in which are concentrated all its faults and weaknesses, from which, however, the still existing better elements have been withdrawn. Even in 'Henry IV.,' he appears the direct contrast to the noble chivalry of the Prince, which, in its inmost essence is indeed vigorous and sound, but already affected by the general unsoundness. When compared with the first youthful acts of heroism performed by the future conqueror of France, Falstaff's actions seem to form the opposite side of this heroism which finds pleasure in a coarse-minded but merry and adventurous life. Here, in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' the satirical element—which in 'Henry IV.' withdrew to the background in favour of the historical objectivity of the representation—is brought forward in distinct and unmistakable features. The whole piece has far more the impress of Shakspeare's own time. Were it not that the mad Prince of Wales and his friend Poins are once or twice spoken of, we should simply imagine that we had before us the physiognomy which England exhibited during the reign of her virgin Queen, for whom the play was at first composed.

As unmistakable, further, is a certain stress laid upon the contrast between the aristocracy and the middle-classes. Falstaff boasts of his knighthood; he fancies that he is doing the burghers an honour in seducing their wives, and this partly explains the ready admittance he finds among them. The country justice, Shallow, and his cousin Slender, in their ridiculous vanity, can never sufficiently emphasise the fact that they, too, belong to the nobility; in so far they are the pendants to Falstaff. Even the circumstance that the noblemen who are awaiting the duke's arrival, cheat the Host out of his horses, and the laughable duel scene between the parson and the doctor must not be altogether overlooked. The burgher class avenges itself pretty severely upon Falstaff's knighthood, and his knighthood does not anywhere appear more miserable and unknightly than when thrown into a basket among dirty clothes, when beaten as an old woman and tormented and pinched as a *fantastic* satyr. In fact, it

seems to me that these three features might be found to contain as many metaphorico-satirical thrusts at the chivalry of the day.

2. TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

'Troilus and Cressida' will be found to stand in the closest affinity to 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' according to the above interpretation. The satirical tendency in the present comedy has also been recognised by other critics, but they have, as it seems to me, too readily contented themselves with the simple discovery, and inquired no further about the deeper significance of the whole. But the piece is not *merely* a delectable satire on the chivalry and heroism of ancient times, nor is it intended as a mere pendant to the Falstaff episode, to give the aristocracy of the sixteenth century the poor consolation that things were not much better with the chivalry of ancient times. The cheap pleasure of *merely* ridiculing what is great and noble, of dragging it down into the mire, and pointing the finger of derision at the spots thus cast upon it, is one in which Shakspeare never indulges. In the present case, the satire, if it were *mere* satire, would not even have the excuse of wishing to improve the corrupt morals and degenerate spirit of the times, by holding up the reflection of its distorted image.

Shakspeare's intention was rather to use the satirical element only for the representation of a higher, we might almost say, an historical view of life. As several of his comedies possess not only a general, but also an historical significance, in so far as they describe—within the comic view of life—the most important moral and political foundations of the life of his age, so the *historical* significance appears here to be made the real nucleus of the composition, and runs through it like a bright streak of light giving a peculiar illustration of that part of history upon which it touches. For, as I think, Shakspeare intended to point out the profound all-pervading contrast between the much-commended mental character and life of Greek antiquity, as compared with the new principle of life in the Christian era, and to reveal the blemishes and

defects of Greek life, especially in regard to its morals, as compared with the ever-increasing admiration bestowed upon it. This could probably not be effected otherwise than by giving a closer view of the essential foundation of the ancient, and more especially of Greek, life and mental culture, taken from a comico-poetic standpoint. And this foundation, as is acknowledged on all hands, is formed by the Homeric poems, or, what is the same thing, the Trojan war in its mythico-poetic conception. But these immortal poems, when regarded from a strictly moral point of view, and in spite of all their ideality, obviously contain a decidedly immoral element, or, if it be preferred, the form in which the idea is clothed—according to our higher modern conception of moral relations—presents an ugly blot. For the whole of the external story turns upon the recovery of an adulteress who has run off with her lover, and whose sentiments and manner of acting can in no way be excused, either by ideal beauty or by the interference of the gods (Aphrodite); on the contrary, the immorality in which even the gods themselves take part, appears only the more glaring by such an interference. Helen's abduction was not worthy of the great war of vengeance which was undertaken by the Greek princes; for the honour of the Greek nation was more deeply wronged by Helen herself than by Paris. A war undertaken for such a cause and such an object must, therefore, be repulsive to the moral consciousness of modern times; and still more do we feel this subsequently when Helen and her wronged husband are again united, and restored to all their rights, as if nothing had happened. It is true that the Greeks had a different idea of marriage and of the mission of women; this we all know, and Shakspeare doubtless knew it also. But the very fact of their entertaining such notions, is the immoral part of the matter. This is the dark side of Greek antiquity: a youthfully vigorous, but also youthfully sensuous view of life supported by the idea of beauty, and idealised as regards form; a view of life which raised beauty into an absolute privilege, and considered its value as greater than that of goodness and truth. It was only individual philosophical minds that rose above this idea, without

however, being able to gain a different standpoint or to raise the minds of the people to a level with their own.

It is from this point—which is the most important historical side, because it is the moral side as well—that Shakspeare here views Greek antiquity. He makes its essential foundation (the Trojan war) the subject of his drama, but—very justly from his point of view—he drops its ideal significance according to which Helen is the prototype of Greek beauty, to possess whom, therefore, is the desire and aim of all Greek hearts. Shakspeare describes the war more in its actual course, but, naturally, with some modifications. The Homeric heroes are stripped of their poetical ideality; their moral weaknesses, on the other hand—which are, indeed, intimated by Homer, but, in the spirit of a Greek, usually characterised as virtues—are here brought into the fullest light. The advantage of bodily and heroic strength, which in Homer ever plays the chief part, is here, accordingly, described only as the rude and clumsy right of the stronger, what in fact it always is when separated from morality and self-control. Agamemnon boasts of the empty title of his supreme command, which, however, he does not possess (not even in Homer), as each of the more important Greek princes acts as he pleases. His dignity is mere semblance, and he finds himself obliged to condescend to all kinds of devices, in order to attain his ends. Menelaus is the imprudent, good-natured simpleton who allows his own disgrace to be emblazoned on the banners of war, and wafted over the world. Nestor, ‘the old chronicle,’ does nothing but continually repeat his stale maxims and old stories, to which no one cares to listen. Ulysses appears exactly what he is in Homer, the wily, crafty rogue, who contrives imperceptibly to direct others according to his own will, except that here his well-devised plans rarely lead to any result. Ajax also, as in Homer, is the powerful warrior who, in bodily strength and prowess, stands next to Achilles, except that his arrogant coarseness, want of spirit and inflated ideas of self, are far more fully displayed. But Diomedes, Achilles and Patroclus fare the worst. Diomedes seems to trouble himself but little about the war, and his only business is to make pretty

girls, of cheap virtue, untrue to their former lovers. Achilles has withdrawn from the scene of war, on account of his traitorous love affair with one of King Priam's daughters, whom Shakspeare introduces in place of Briseis. He amuses himself in his tent with Patroclus and Thersites, but breaks his word a second time by finally, after the death of Patroclus, taking part in the battle contrary to his promise. His heroic greatness is mere semblance; it is only by a treacherous attack that—with the aid of his Myrmidons—he succeeds in killing Hector, who was resting and unarmed. Patroclus, lastly, is Achilles' shadow. The nobler form of knighthood is bestowed upon the Trojan heroes, although they too are but little better than the Greeks, for immorality is also rife in Troy. The reason of this is, doubtless, not so much owing to the inclination of the Middle Ages to sympathise with fallen Troy, because Æneas was regarded as the ancestor of the Romans, nor owing to English patriotism, which gladly believed in the supposed descent of the Britons and Romans from Trojan blood; the motive was probably more an artistic one. Shakspeare required a contrast to the heroic life of the Greeks, in order more clearly to exhibit the actual state of their morality; for his chief object evidently was to give, in the form and by means of comedy, a living representation of the immoral element in the Homeric poems. Hence the strong expressions with which the cowardly and slanderous, but witty Thersites describes the cause of the war, and the campaign itself, which expressions, moreover, acquire weight through frequent repetition. Hence too the disgraceful, secret understanding between Achilles and the daughter of the hostile king—an incident which Shakspeare, to a certain extent, unconsciously added to the Greek heroic legend, inasmuch as one of the post-Homeric (cyclic) poets makes Achilles in love with Helen, and thus obtains a motive for the further development of the fortunes of the war. Hence, lastly, the fuller development of the story of the love between the faithful, honest Troilus and the false, voluptuous Cressida, which although not the actual centre, has nevertheless given its name to the drama, because the life of the hero and heroine gives a reflex—in a modified

form—of the story of Menelaus and his faithless consort. Pandarus plays the same part that Aphrodite undertakes with Paris and Helen; he, with unmistakable irony, concludes the piece with a flat moral that a pander's work never does good and is always ill requited.

The tendency to parody and satire, which is thus conspicuous enough in the action represented, as well as in the conception and demeanour of the characters, is reflected with equal clearness in the form and colouring of the diction. It has already been remarked by Tyrwhitt, that more bombastic phrases are to be found in 'Troilus and Cressida,' than in any other six of Shakspeare's pieces taken together; and Gervinus justly adds that the love of slander in Thersites is so plenteously furnished with the eloquence of insult and injury, and the impatience of Ajax before the duel, on the other hand, so full of typhonic bombast, that this alone would betray the poet's intention of lowering the whole action by means of a caricatured representation, especially as Hector's challenge delivered by Æneas in the style of Amadis, is so pompous, that Agamemnon, to whom it is addressed, is himself in doubt whether it is intended in earnest or in mockery. In fact, the language of the piece is pervaded by a spirit of irony—more or less perceptible everywhere—which, to every one acquainted with Shakspeare's dramatic diction, is an unequivocal indication that the poet had before him here no ordinary comedy, nor, as might be supposed, a so-called 'history,' nor even an (unsuccessful) tragedy.

If the satire has such a good foundation in the subject-matter itself, it also has its full poetical justification. Its significance rises with the greatness and importance of the subject, and it is well known how great was the admiration of ancient literature, art and poetry in Shakspeare's time, how the fondness for and the imitation of it began to pervade all classes of the people, and all domains of life. Some historical features of this tendency have already been pointed out in our first volume.* Shakspeare, in his profound insight, must unquestionably have recognised the great and beneficial influence which a closer acquaintance with the high culture of antiquity

* See vol. i. 184 f.

had already exercised, and subsequently might and would have upon the enlargement of the mind, upon the development of philosophy, of poetry and of the plastic arts. But, with a prophetic eye, he also foresaw the dangers to be feared from that quarter, the deep schism in religious and moral life which must inevitably follow as soon as not only the small section of scholars and the educated upper classes, but the people also gave themselves up to this imitative admiration. It was in this prophetic spirit which clearly saw through the darkness of coming centuries, as well as through the dimness of a distant past, that Shakspeare wrote his deeply significant satire on the life of the Homeric heroes. He had no intention of running down what was great, or of degrading what was noble, and still less of attacking the poetical dignity of Homer or heroic poetry. But he undoubtedly did wish to hold up a warning against that unqualified admiration, which men are so apt to fall into, and which is so dangerous when it concerns what is moral, and when a wrong estimate is formed of it; he wished, at the same time, to give a vivid representation of the general truth that what is great, high and eminent in man—even though surrounded by the halo of plastic ideality and of a past embellished by legends—often appears trifling and insignificant when looked at, if we may so speak, from the bird's-eye point of view of true *moral ideality*, and that this standpoint is nevertheless the right one for estimating and valuing human affairs. This thought—the view taken from this standpoint over what is humanly lofty and great and what is most valued and glorified—it was Shakspeare's intention to present to the English public of his day in the form of Greek heroism, and he clothed it in the garb of comedy, because it was dramatically practicable only in this form.

This intention, as I am convinced, was, however, combined with another and more special object which referred to the poet himself and to his art, which, it is true, hovers in the background only, but of which we nevertheless get an occasional glimpse. As we have already seen, Ben Jonson—who as a man was Shakspeare's friend, as a poet his antagonist—made it the aim of his critical

and poetical activity, to revive the ancient form and conception of dramatic art, according to the misinterpreted rules of Aristotle, and thus to remodel the English national drama. Shakspeare, although often attacked, had never entered publicly or directly into the controversy. He disdained to do so, possibly because in so purely theoretical a domain, nothing can be decided by vague abstract reasonings about general ideas and principles. But surely the points of his adversaries' shafts were broken, as soon as Shakspeare had shown, in a striking manner, that the spirit and character, the morals and customs of antiquity differed essentially from the views and feelings of modern times. It must then have appeared an absurd proceeding to seek to apply foreign and ancient artistic forms and laws to modern poetry. And what more binding, more striking and convincing proof could Shakspeare have adduced, than to embody his intention in a poem, and thus present it to the eyes of all? Only we must not expect to find this secondary intention (if the poet had any such intention) exhibited in very prominent features. Such indications would have destroyed the work of art as such, and Shakspeare possessed too high an appreciation of the dignity of art to seek to employ it as a means for his own purposes. There is but one trait that gives a gentle intimation of this secondary intention, and yet it is one quite intelligible to the initiated. I allude to the passage in act ii. 2, where Hector, censuring Paris and Troilus, for not having sufficiently discussed the disputed question, whether Helen was or was not to be delivered up, says:

‘Not much
Unlike young men, whom Aristotle thought
Unfit to hear moral philosophy.’

This passage—which is apparently so inappropriate and introduced by a most flagrant anachronism, and yet on this very account produces a decidedly comic impression—seems to me undoubtedly to contain a satirical thrust at Shakspeare's pedantic opponents, who, in all cases, appealed to their Aristotle and fancied that every advantage was gained by fishing up a word from him, and then bringing it to market.

If my conjecture is correct, it will also throw some light upon the external history of this curious piece. It appeared in print in the two quartos of 1609, both of which were published by the same bookseller. One of these is accompanied by a letter from the Editor, addressed to the readers, in which it is expressly stated that the piece had never been acted before; the other has the usual addition to the title 'as it was acted by the King's Majesties Servants at the Globe.' And yet a 'Troilus and Cressida' is entered at Stationers' Hall, as early as the 7th of Feb. 1603, without Shakspeare's name, it is true, but as having been acted by the Lord Chamberlain's company. The latter circumstance, and an allusion in Dekker's 'Satiromastix,' which appeared in 1602, makes it seem probable that this piece was Shakspeare's 'Troilus and Cressida.' Accordingly, it must have appeared on the stage as early as the beginning of 1602. And this was just the time when Ben Jonson appeared with his 'Poetaster' and his attacks upon the popular theatre, advocating the cause of the ancient drama. While, therefore, Dekker was working at his 'Satiromastix,' Shakspeare may have been somewhat quicker with his answer in 'Troilus and Cressida,' probably, however, with but the first hasty sketch of the whole. In this way the piece may have been performed several times in the small winter theatre of Blackfriars, or perhaps only at court and prepared for the press by some publisher; at a later period, however, when Ben Jonson—as we have seen—was defeated, and the interest in the dispute had subsided, it may have been withdrawn from the stage, and, therefore, have ceased to be printed. However when, in 1608, Ben Jonson and his party, as we have seen, became more powerful than ever, Shakspeare may then have wholly remodelled the earlier play. This form was probably the one that fell into the hands of the publisher of the quartos, who had it printed so hurriedly—a sign of Shakspeare's great popularity—that the first edition may have been published, or a portion of the ready copies sold, before it had appeared on the stage. The form, therefore, in which we now have it, I should be inclined to assign to the year 1608-9.

'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' on the other hand, may have been written as early as 1600 or 1601; for the piece is entered at Stationers' Hall under the date of the 18th of Jan. 1602. That it could not have appeared much earlier is proved—apart from the language and character of the drama—by the external circumstances that it is not mentioned among the twelve pieces enumerated by Meres. The reasons given by Chalmers for assigning it to the year 1596, before the appearance of 'Henry IV.,' have been sufficiently refuted by Drake. Charles Knight* is inclined to date it as far back as 1592, inasmuch as he thinks that the German duke (whose suite cheat the Host out of his horses), contains an allusion to the journey of Prince Frederick of Würtemberg to England, which took place in 1592. But this hypothesis is inadmissible from the simple fact that the piece must necessarily have been written after 'Henry IV.,' as Halliwell† has satisfactorily proved.‡ But if this hypothesis be accepted, we should also have to assume that it did not appear till after 1598, and not—as Knight§ now thinks—as early as 1596; otherwise it would assuredly have been mentioned by Meres.

Lastly, from what sources Shakspeare borrowed the materials for these two tragedies seems to me a matter of small importance. In both the invention is too much a secondary consideration; the chief interest in the one piece lies too much in Falstaff's character and in the other is too much centred upon the view of life in classic antiquity. Halliwell|| has collected all the various novels and tales which might have furnished the poet with individual features or situations. But not any one of these, nor their

* *Pictorial Edition of Shakspeare*, vol. iii.

† *First Sketch of Shakspeare's Merry Wives of Windsor*, xviii. f.

‡ H. Kurz (*Zu Shakspeare's Leben und Schaffen*, etc., Munich, 1868, p. 59 ff. 100 ff.) has recently taken up this hypothesis again, and endeavours to point out—more particularly by reason of the above-mentioned allusion—that not only *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and the two parts of *Henry IV.*, but that *Henry V.* also must have been written as early as 1595. His proof, however, is a mere tissue of hypotheses, which, it is true, he treats as established facts that might lead to further conclusions, but, in my opinion, they are not even plausible.

§ *Studies of Shakspeare*.

|| *L.c.* 75 ff.

totality can be regarded as his source. That Shakspeare borrowed the subject from the *Tragedie von einer Ehebrecherin*, a drama written by Duke Heinrich Julius of Brunswick—even though with various modifications as Kurz* thinks he has proved—is very improbable, as there is no trace of the dramatic works of the German duke having been known in England in those days.

As regards 'Troilus and Cressida,' there are several works from which Shakspeare might have drawn his materials; perhaps from an older piece by Th. Dekker and H. Chettle, which Henslowe mentions in his Diary under the date of the 16th of April, 1599; perhaps from the 'dialogised ballad' which, according to the Stationers' registers, was to be printed in 1581; probably, however, from Chaucer's five books of 'Troilus and Creseyda' (of which the last edition appeared in 1602), together with Chapman's translation which was published in separate parts from 1598.†

* In the Introduction to his translation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

† Collier's *Shakespeare*, vi. 5. Compare also Gervinus' *Commentaries on Shakespeare*.

CHAPTER VIII.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE. CYMBELINE.

'MEASURE for Measure,' like 'The Merchant of Venice,' has been classed by Heminge and Condell, in the first part of their edition of Shakspeare's works, among the 'comedies.' But the subject upon which the play is founded is of so serious a nature, and treated by the poet with so much seriousness, the representation throughout borders so closely upon the domain of tragedy, and the comic parts are so decidedly left in the background, that the drama cannot altogether be called a comedy, at least, not in the same sense as the pieces already discussed. It has more resemblance with those pieces which Shakspeare's earlier contemporaries—especially Beaumont and Fletcher—introduced upon the stage under the title of 'tragi-comedies.' Shakspeare does not seem to have known, or not to have cared to adopt this title, perhaps from a right feeling that—from an æsthetico-artistic point of view—great objection might be raised against the propriety of such an intermediate species between tragedy and comedy, which seemed rather like a hybrid production. And yet the difference, to which the above name refers, is brought so prominently forward in the character and the treatment of the subject, if not in the actual essence and nature of the poem, that we cannot fail to see it even though we may not be inclined to regard it as a distinct species of drama. It is much the same, as we shall see, with 'Cymbeline;' I have therefore classed both dramas together, and have inserted them here as an appendage to the comedies and a point of transition to the historical dramas.

1. MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

This piece was probably written at least seven years after 'The Merchant of Venice,' and the two dramas also differ

very much both in tone and colouring.* And yet to judge from its ideal subject-matter, it shows the closest affinity to 'The Merchant of Venice;' at least, the basis upon which the whole is erected is the same, even though the structure itself bears a different character.

A Duke of Vienna forms the resolution to exchange, for a time, his purple mantle for a monk's cowl, and, under the pretext of a distant and pressing journey, to leave his sceptre in the hands of another, in order meanwhile, in a state of incognito, to examine into the state of his dominions, and more especially into the mode and the effect of his representative's government. This plan may appear a capricious idea, and yet when examined more closely it has a well-founded motive both in the character and the position of the Duke. He is a man of warm affections for his fellow-creatures, and of high morality. Accordingly, he has hitherto exercised his power with clemency and indulgence; he fears with too much indulgence, for he has observed that vice and crime are alarmingly on the increase among his subjects. His wish was to ascertain whether his fears were well-founded, and also to correct his own mistakes, without appearing inconsistent or exposing himself to the reproach of punishing that, for which he

* Tieck conjectured that it was written about 1612—partly on account of the language and style, partly because he thought he had found the piece to contain an allusion to the literary club which met at St. Dunstan's under the presidency of Ben Jonson. The deep sombre colouring of the piece also, that heavy, serious tone which is apparent in Shakspeare's later works and is already felt here, seemed to point to a late origin. In the first edition of this work, therefore, I shared Tieck's opinion. But it has been proved, through the *Accounts of the Revels at Court* (p. 204), published by Peter Cunningham, that *Measure for Measure* had been performed at Court on St. Stephen's night (Dec. 26), 1604; accordingly it must, at latest, have been written during the course of that year, but probably also, no earlier. And yet, for reasons already stated, I think that it was subsequently remodelled by Shakspeare, and considerably altered. Perhaps the ever-increasing rigorous spirit of the Puritans—with their love of persecution and pharisaic pride of virtue—may, after the accession of James, have induced the poet to rehandle the subject, as well to remodel the drama; he might (when the nuisance continued to increase, after 1604) have laid on his colours more thickly, and thus renewed his attack more sharply. *Measure for Measure* did not appear in print till in the folio of 1623.

was himself to blame; lastly he also wished to test the man whom he had chosen as his representative, and who had given him reason to doubt his moral character. Perhaps the Duke's object in trusting the supreme power to the earnest, zealous and sternly-virtuous Angelo, and in placing the gentle Escalus by his side in a subordinate position, may have been a longing for a short break in the everlasting monotony of state business, and a wish to obtain an opportunity for more closely observing his own surroundings, and those of his people and country. As was to be expected, Angelo exercises his deputed power with great rigour and apparent conscientiousness. At the very outset he revives an old and dormant law which threatens to punish all sexual sins with death, and causes an indeed extremely light-minded, but by no means vicious young nobleman, Claudio, to be thrown into prison, in order that, in accordance with the law, the sentence of death may be carried out upon him. The attempted deliverance, and final rescue of the young man by his sister with the Duke's assistance, forms the centre of the not very involved intrigue. And Angelo—who makes such profession of strict moral integrity, who boasts of his virtue, who insists upon order and discipline, and inexorably persecutes sin and frailty in others, and doubtless has the good-will to be what he seems—he it is who falls from his arrogated height (and in a much worse manner) into the very crime which—even contrary to his promised word—he intended to punish with the utmost severity of the law. Having once yielded to human weakness, he becomes a worthless hypocrite and deceiver. For it is this *pride* of virtue which thinks, above all things, of its own reputation and fame among men, this moral *arrogance*, which is always satisfied with itself, this self-inflated *assurance* that most readily falls a victim to temptation; and it sinks the deeper the more it endeavours to save external appearances. That the hypocrite is finally unmasked by the counter-intrigue of the Duke (which is favoured by accident), but pardoned for the sake of the faithful Mariana, whom Angelo had forsaken; that Claudio is saved, and his truly virtuous sister rewarded for her magnanimity; that the frivolous chatterbox Lucio is put to open shame, and the pimping

clown Pompey gets a severe rebuke—these turns of the action bring the piece as close to the domain of comedy, as it is removed from it by the tone and colour of the representation.

From these indications alone it will readily be seen where the internal centre of the artistic organism is to be found. Strict virtue and pure morality are certainly—as every one knows—the basis and end of human existence. But they are this only when accompanied by *love*, that inner and close communion of spirit which embraces all men, and which is one and the same thing as the idea of humanity which has so often been misunderstood. Outward, strictly moral virtue, which in all cases thinks only of the observances of the law, of the final consequence and effect, which is something apart from love, which confounds morality with outward righteousness, and accounts this righteousness a merit, this pharisaic virtue is in truth no virtue, is nothing but a glittering soap-bubble, that bursts with the first breath of temptation. It is not virtuousness in this sense, not the outward lawful commissions and omissions, but that purity of heart, that integrity of the moral spirit which despises sin, but pities and tries to save the sinner; in short, love is the *soul* of all moral relations, and combines strictness with clemency and forbearance. This is the true foundation of human life, for it is only in and through the exercise of love that human virtue is possible, and, in fact, a virtue at all; we here have the same truth that is maintained in ‘The Merchant of Venice,’ in face of justice. And if it be true that it is through love alone that man has the power of being virtuous and acting virtuously, and that he stands firm only in the fear of, at any moment, being liable to fall himself, then he is bound to show his fallen and penitent brother mercy instead of justice, and forgiveness instead of punishment. Shakspeare expresses this sentiment in the beautiful words (of Isabella) (ii. 2) :

‘Alas, alas!

Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once;
And He that might the vantage best have took,
Found out the remedy. How would you be,
If He, which is the top of judgment, should

But judge you as you are? O, think on that,
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new made !'

and again in the eloquent lamentation of the same Isabella, a passage of sublime pathos :

' Could great men thunder
As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet,
For every pelting, petty officer,
Would use his heaven for thunder :
Nothing but thunder. Merciful heaven !
Thou rather, with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt
Split'st the unwedgeable and gnarled oak.
Than the soft myrtle : But man, proud man !
Dress'd in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence,—like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven,
As make the angels weep ; who, with our spleens
Would all themselves laugh mortal.'

When the deeply significant poem so fully explains its own character, it would be presumption to add another word on the subject. All that remains for me to do, is to point out the manner in which the meaning of the whole is reflected in the various parts, in the characters, situations and relations. I have already intimated this as regards the principal moments of the action, which turn upon the conduct of Angelo (whose utter worthlessness required to be exposed, and which could be done only by the deception played upon him by Isabella and Mariana with the Duke's assistance), upon Claudio's danger and deliverance, and upon the doings of the Duke and Isabella, the representatives of true virtue. The chief characters are the Duke, Angelo and Isabella. The first two are so clearly and sharply delineated, the fundamental features of their natures, the motives of their actions so distinctly brought forward, that they do not stand in need of any further explanation. It is equally clear that they represent the two poles of the contrast, the reconciliation of which is the subject in question: the Duke is clemency and forbearance, forgiveness and mercy ; Angelo the severity of the law, the rigour and the pride of virtue and self-righteousness. More difficult is the understanding of

Isabella's character, for although it is developed with great care, both as regards delineation and colouring, it has nevertheless been interpreted and judged in very different ways.* In my opinion she stands by the side of the Duke, in so far as the latter, so to say, represents the negative, and Isabella the positive contrast to Angelo. In her, likewise, the strictness and decision of virtuous will and action forms the centre of her nature; she too recognises the necessity of the law being firmly and strongly maintained against that vice which she most abhors, and would not plead for, but that she must (ii. 2). This is why she finds the rules of the nunnery, which she has entered as a novice, too lax (i. 5), and wishes that there were more strict restraints upon the sisterhood.

But this strictness, in her, does not rest upon the endeavour to be considered virtuous, but to be virtuous; with her it proceeds from her inmost nature, from the spotless purity of her mind, from her love of what is good, from her aversion to evil. This is why she at first shows an apparent coldness, shyness and respectful fear of Angelo, the universally-recognized hero of virtue; she has not the courage to unfold the eloquence of her sisterly affection before him, she allows herself to be intimidated by his stern, repulsive answer. But this is the reason also of her anger, her contempt and her threat when she perceives that his virtue is devoid of inner soundness, that it is not his real nature, but only a mask. This is the reason of the harshness and indignation with which she answers her brother's entreaty to agree to Angelo's shameful proposal, and why she holds up to him its dishonourable meanness, and lowness. For Isabella is above all things strict towards herself, that is to say, chaste by nature, and whereas Angelo only imagines himself strong enough to resist every temptation, she actually possesses this strength, because she not only has the will to be virtuous, not only shrinks from the sinful deed, but her soul revolts at the mere thought of allowing herself to be entrapped by sin. Whether or not this strictness, this purity, this unapproachableness, is the result of an in-

* Mrs. Jameson, and R. Grant White in his *Shakspeare's Scholar*, p. 133 f.

herent coldness of blood, enough, there it is, and it forms the essence of her spiritual nature, and confers peculiar greatness and dignity upon her character. This is why she is unable, in the outburst of deep feeling, to apply the usual means of female eloquence, and to beg for pity and mercy amid sighs and tears by displaying her sisterly affection. In place of this she possesses a clear, penetrating intellect, a finely-cultivated mind, which (as the above-mentioned passage shows) distinctly perceives that in every individual case, the sin and the sinner must be well distinguished, and that in human judgment, strictness must be combined with clemency, justice with mercy, because, as regards good as well as evil, it does not simply depend upon the deed, but above all upon the character and the disposition of the doer. This she impresses upon the representative of the law with all acuteness of thought and warmth of feeling; in this sense, her endeavour is to save her brother, and not merely to save him but at the same time to improve and to raise him. Isabella, accordingly, is not amiable in the usual feminine sense of the word, but she is venerable, worthy of being a princess. For this reason she not only receives an offer of marriage from the Duke, but it is this very greatness and dignity of character, together with her great and equally unusual beauty that captivates Angelo's proud heart, which had hitherto been proof against feminine grace and amiability, and proves the cause of the downfall of his hypocritical virtue. It is self-evident, accordingly, what a close relation appears to subsist between Isabella's character and the meaning and spirit of the whole drama.

The Duke has placed the aged, clement and thoughtful Escalus as a counterpoise to the strict, energetic and zealous Angelo, in order that the wheel may not roll too quickly down the steep incline. He is introduced to show that a character like Angelo cannot be guided and converted by remonstrances and warnings, but that such natures can be corrected only by life, that is, by experiences that affect them deeply. This improvement the Duke hopes to see effected in Angelo; on this account, and still more so out of regard for Mariana, he pardons him. Mariana, it is true, is a mere secondary personage,

introduced in the first place in order to throw a clearer light upon Angelo's character, and to solve the complication of the action in accordance with the rules of art; but she, at the same time, throws some light on the character of Isabella, with whom she is contrasted as a devoted woman, living only for her love, and animated only by the endeavour to save the man she loves; therefore, she at the same time represents the other pole of the great contrast—the one-sidedness of blind, inconsiderate love as opposed to the demands of morality.

In like manner Claudio and Juliet appear but in the background; they are the successful pictures of that human frailty which sins from having too much liberty, which is led to contrition and repentance through suffering and misery, and hence, deserve to obtain mercy and forgiveness. Thus they form a contrast to Angelo's false righteousness and Isabella's true virtue, and stand on the ground of common reality from which great and noble minds have, now and again, to remove the weeds so as to furnish the new crop with air and light. In Lucio, Froth, Pompey, Mistress Over-done and Barnardine, we have human vices, failings and crimes in their various stages. Lucio, without being actually a bad character, without being intentionally wicked—as is proved by his sympathy for Isabella and Claudio—has become both vicious and voluptuous through frivolity; young Master Froth is mere froth, without solidity enough for deep crime, but also much too light for virtue; Mistress Over-done, the bawd, loves sin from long habit and because she gains a livelihood by it. The murderer Barnardine is the personification of the coarse, sensual nature of man which becomes inhuman, because humanity has withdrawn her training and guiding hand; in him we see the sin of the individual which has its root within itself, but is at the same time fostered by the sinfulness of the whole race. Lastly, Pompey assists vice out of mere folly; he does not know, nor does he trouble himself much about his wishes and actions, because he looks upon life as a mere tap-room where a man can be merry at will, but only for money. His immorality consists less in inclination and deeds, than in the want

of proper knowledge, in his perverted view of life and in his love of money. He has the conviction that no man is ever free from faults and vices, and, accordingly, goes through life thoughtlessly and carelessly; hence, in reality, it is his folly alone that is his fault, and he can therefore the more readily be tolerated. Although he plays the part of the clown, it is easy to see that it is not his vocation to bring his part prominently forward. Ordinary folly was too light to bear the whole weight of the view of life depicted here; and a meditative, tragic fool—like King Lear's friend—was out of place with the fundamental plan of the piece. Shakspeare, therefore, employs the clown here merely as a secondary personage, in order to throw light upon the meaning of the whole from a special point of view; he has no more right or significance than the other characters who are classed in the same category with himself. But if it be asked, In what does this right consist? why are we presented with this complete catalogue of sinners and criminals? I think the answer is self-evident from the above explanation: we are to have an insight into the true nature of human virtue and morality, and therefore must necessarily also look into the depths of man's immorality and viciousness. This is the object of the drama. But in addition to this, the sinners with their various transgressions are intended to show us that all are far more deserving of mercy and forgiveness than Angelo, the arrogantly virtuous, haughty hypocrite. Let us but listen to the significant words of the Duke, in regard to Barnardine (v. 1):

‘There was a friar told me of this man :—
Sirrah, thou art said to have a stubborn soul,
That apprehends no further than this world,
And squar’st thy life according. Thou’rt condemned;
But, for those earthly faults, I quit them all;
And pray thee take this mercy to provide
For better times to come :—Friar, *advise him*,
I leave him to your hand.’

We cannot doubt but that the poet introduced these characters for the excellent reason of allowing their evil viciousness to give a reflex of the greater amount of evil in Angelo's nature.

The reason that 'Measure for Measure' enjoys so little approbation—in spite of its wealth of profound thoughts and its life-like, sharply-delineated and well-developed characters (which are as important as they are original), and in spite also of its perfectly Shakspearian language and composition—does not, I think, lie so much in the subject-matter of the action, which is certainly repulsive and offensive to our more delicate, perhaps only the effeminate state of our feelings, as in the peculiar colouring of the piece. I mean to say it is a fault in the drama, that the pharisaism and the various vices which are contrasted with it are exhibited in colours too glaring and in outlines too sharp, hence in an almost revolting manner; that, in the struggle with the enemy which it attacks, the drama becomes offensive, sharp, and bitter; that it tries to arouse our disgust, and to engage our whole soul against this enemy, and thus, as it were, invites us to give our assistance in combatting it, to engage in real action in ordinary life, in place of raising us above the latter into the ideal spheres of art. Perhaps this was Shakspeare's object; he may have written the piece or remodelled it subsequently, with the express intention of arousing a spirit of sound, true morality in the nation in opposition to the Puritanical proceedings. But even though he had the most urgent occasion for so doing, from an artistic point of view, this tendency was a fault. The sharpness, the bitterness, the rousing of our feelings and the moral seriousness—which is pressed so much into the foreground and degenerates into prosaic moralising—are so many offences against the nature of poetry, and weaken the effect that art alone ought to produce.

A few words, in conclusion, about the title of the drama. It does not, as might seem, convey the meaning of like for like, as in the old *jus talionis*, a limb for a limb, a life for a life; that is its significance only in an ironical sense. Its true purport has to be inferred from the leading thought of the whole, as explained above. It is intended to signify that man can judge only of crime, only of the violation of justice in the narrower sense, but that, on the other hand, no man should judge another in regard to *moral* actions, inasmuch as no one is without sin and each is liable to

commit the sin he condemns. As, therefore, each desires and hopes for mercy, so he ought to grant mercy; that to which he himself lays claim he ought to bestow upon others; the measure by which he himself hopes to be measured, he ought to apply to others. 'This is the *measure for measure*, the *like for like* of true justice.

Besides this, 'Measure for Measure' shows more distinctly than any other how deeply Shakspeare could penetrate into a traditional subject and imbue it with dramatic animation. That the subject had been prepared for the stage as early as 1578 by Whetstone in his 'Promos and Cassandra' has been stated in our first volume. Whetstone had drawn his subject-matter from a novel of Giraldi Cinthio,* of which he subsequently gave an English version in his 'Heptameron on Civil Discourses' (1582). Both drama and novel were, therefore, unquestionably known to Shakspeare. But every circumstance in which our poet has deviated from both is an improvement no less dramatic than significant, as every thoughtful reader will readily perceive if I but mention some of the main points.† In Cinthio's novel, Claudio (Vico) is actually executed, a circumstance which, however, even Whetstone altered, though in a different sense to what Shakspeare has done. In both the Duke (in Whetstone as the King of Hungary, in Cinthio, the Emperor Maximilian) remains actually behind the scenes; Shakspeare has made him the chief character of his play, and thereby given it a wholly different form, and it thus first obtains its full significance. In Cinthio and Whetstone, Isabella (Exitia-Cassandra) actually gives herself up to Angelo's guilty passion, whereas, in Shakspeare, Mariana takes her place. This is a very essential improvement. For it not only actually lessens Angelo's guilt, and forms a motive for the forgiveness of the Duke—which would otherwise have appeared unjust—but it is also a means of avoiding Isabella's marriage with Angelo, which is the end in Cinthio and

* *Hecatommithi ovvero cento novelle, etc.* Montereale, 1565, more complete Venet. 1566.

† The drama has been reprinted by Stevens among the *Six old Plays on which Shakspeare founded his Measure for Measure, etc.* London, 1779, i. 1. Echtermeyer and Simrock give the novels.

in Whetstone, and so grossly offends every delicate sense of feeling. Lastly, several of the secondary personages are Shakspeare's own invention. The main point, however, is that the deeply significant fundamental idea of the whole is entirely his own.

2. CYMBELINE.

This piece has even greater resemblance to the so-called tragi-comedies than 'Measure for Measure,' not indeed as regards spirit and character, but in the plan, and in the course and issue of the action. Heminge and Condell have, it is true, classed 'Cymbeline' among the tragedies; but it is obviously even less a tragedy in the sense of the five great tragedies—among which it is inserted—than 'Measure for Measure' is a comedy.* In spite of the seriousness which pervades the whole, in spite of the character of the action which everywhere borders upon the tragic, and in spite of the complete—in Shakspeare striking—exclusion of every comic element, 'Cymbeline' cannot be called a tragedy; not so much on account of the happy issue of the action as because it has no tragic plot (the wager entered into by Posthumus is no subject for tragic treatment), no tragic pathos and no tragic catastrophe, in short, because the whole drama is not worked out in a tragic manner. If, therefore, we are not granted any intermediate species between tragedy and comedy, the only thing to be done is to class it among the comedies, notwithstanding its serious, nay sombre colouring, and its total want of comic characters and scenes. And yet, to a certain extent, it does represent a new, distinct species; it is, as Gervinus justly remarks, an epic drama or dramatic epos, but in Shakspeare's style, *i.e.* no malformation by the preponderance of the epic element owing to a want of dramatic power and utter want of life-like characters (as in Greene's dramas), but an harmonious blending of the epic and dramatic styles.

* In what an arbitrary manner the editors of Shakspeare's works proceeded with the classification of the dramas, or rather, how indefinite was the usage of the language as regards the names tragedy and comedy, is proved by the circumstance that even *Troilus and Cressida* is called a *tragedy* on the title-page of the folio edition.

This peculiarity gives the piece its excellences as well as its defects. Hence, in the first place, its decidedly romantic character, which is unmistakably manifested in the changing scenery, in the union of such entirely different, heterogeneous and very dissimilar elements, in the strangeness of the incidents and their complication and *dénoûement*, which verge upon the fantastic and wonderful, in the sudden appearance and interference of the gods, in short, in the whole spirit and character of the play; for, only on the soil of romantic poetry was this blending of the two elements possible. Hence also the unusually great number of persons represented, all of whom take a pretty equal share in the action, so that Posthumus and Imogen are only slightly more prominent than the others. Hence, again, the equally unusual abundance of deeds and events, in which historical elements and relations meet purely poetical, romantic incidents and complications in a motley throng. Hence, lastly, the glimmering twilight, the picturesque chiaroscuro which pervades the whole, the sharp contrast between a semi-legendary past, upon which the piece is generally based, and the clear present, where that portion of the action played in Italy is placed.

In these points it is the epic character which is chiefly manifest, but the levers which set the action in motion and lead it forward are of a decidedly dramatic nature. For it is invariably the definite intentions, plans and intrigues of the various characters, one against the other, which give rise to the action, and which, at first invariably occasion mischief, ruin families, break the bond of marriage, plunge the state into confusion, but ultimately—by thwarting and paralysing one another in turn—lead to what ought and must necessarily be, because it is what is right and good. Thus at the very outset—through the intrigues of the vicious Queen, who wishes to secure the throne for her own son by arranging a marriage between him and the King's daughter—Posthumus is sentenced to banishment on account of his secret marriage with Imogen. The latter has rebelled against her father's authority, and the father vents his passionate violence upon his child and his son-in-law. Iachimo, thereupon, by means of

cunning and deception, wins his strange wager, and Posthumus, in despair and revenge, resolves to have his faithless wife put to death. However, a, so to say, honest intrigue of his servant Pisanio (who is as honest as he is sly) whom Posthumus calls upon to do the murder, and who betrays the motive of the crime, prevents the design of Posthumus from being accomplished, and induces Imogen to flee from Court. Dressed as a boy, Imogen starts off for Italy in order to find her husband; but weakness and sickness lead her to seek shelter in the cave of Belarius, where she falls into a death-like swoon owing to having taken of the potion which the Queen—deceived by her physician—had regarded as poison, and had given to Pisanio as a strengthening draught, in order to rid herself of him and Imogen. Cloten (the Queen's son by her first husband), dressed in the clothes of Posthumus, is also brought to the cave of Belarius by Pisanio's intrigue and his own guilty intention; Belarius had many years previously been banished from Court through lies and slander, and in revenge had stolen the king's sons in their infancy and brought them up as his own. One of the latter kills the boastful and bloodthirsty Cloten, and throws his head into the river. Imogen (who is supposed to be dead) and Cloten are buried together in the hollow of a rock. Here Imogen awakes, and, deceived by the assumed dress, mistakes the trunk of Cloten for the body of her husband. In deep sorrow about her beloved, to whom her heart still clings in purest love and fidelity, Imogen is there found by Lucius, the Roman general, who is about to wage war against Cymbeline, and takes her into his service as a page. Deceived by Pisanio into the belief that Imogen has been murdered, Posthumus has joined the Roman forces in the hope of meeting death in battle, on British soil. But upon arriving there, the love of country prevails; he changes his plans and fights as a common peasant in the British ranks. By his valour, and that of Belarius and his supposed sons, the British gain the battle which they had almost lost. Posthumus, however, in his desire to meet death, again changes his dress and allows himself to be taken prisoner as a Roman soldier. On being led to death he

overhears Iachimo confess his wicked artifice and is thus induced to make himself known. The Queen, in the ravings of mortal sickness and a disturbed state of mind, has confessed her evil doings; Belarius is compelled to disclose his secret, and Cloten's murder is discovered; Imogen also is recognised, and all ends in peace and joy, forgiveness and reconciliation.

It is evident that life is here—as in 'The Tempest' and most of the tragedies—conceived more particularly from that point of view from which the will and the action, the resolve and the intention appear as the powers forming and directing it. But whereas in 'The Tempest,' human will and action are overcome by the secret power of the good which opposes them, and thus acquire quite a different and contrary purport, and whereas in tragedy the power of the good shows its redeeming, elevating and purifying force in the tragic pathos, i.e. in the ruin of the hero, it here asserts itself only as a hidden, invisible lever which counterbalances the plans and the intentions of men in such a manner that they annul and destroy one another in turn, and thus ultimately bring about what is right and good. In the former case the power of good works more positively, in the latter more negatively, inasmuch as it principally manifests itself only in the self-annihilation of evil. To exhibit this contradiction, this impotence, this self-destruction of human resolves and intentions, where they purpose to make themselves the destiny both of the individual man and of the other personages; to exhibit the futility of such a self-made destiny is, as I think, the intention of the drama, the ideal point of unity upon which the complicated action turns. In other words, Shakspeare has here intended poetically to illustrate the proposition that man is *not* master of his destiny, which is unquestionably as true as its opposite, that we possess neither the right nor the power to dispose either of our own life and death, weal or woe, or of that of others that all such endeavours neutralise themselves, and lead to contrary results; that it is genuine love and fidelity alone, and that immaculate purity of soul—which is always combined with undimmed clearness of consciousness, and

therefore true to itself, looking neither to the right nor to the left (calmly and submissively wanders on its course) —that arrive safely at their goal, notwithstanding all the dangers which threaten them, and all the intrigues that are spun around them.

Regarding the drama from this point of view, it seems to me that the representation forms an harmonious, well-arranged whole, in spite of the number of different characters, and their various doings and sufferings. The Queen and Imogen, Cloten and Posthumus, are obviously the two poles of the contrast which separate the various personages and their characters; by their side we have respectively, Cymbeline and Belarius, Iachimo and Pisanio. The Queen—whose guilty machinations threaten to be the ruin of Posthumus, who holds the reins of government in her own hands, and has the intention of directing the fortunes of all, in accordance with her own resolves—lives to see all her plans thwarted, and in the end herself falls a victim to the destructive power of her own wickedness. Cloten, although only ruled by the Queen, is caught in his own trap by his arrogance, his coarseness and passionateness, and his fate reflects, in a different form, the same thought that is represented in the life of his mother. Imogen and Posthumus have, it is true, brought their sufferings upon themselves by their marriage without the consent of her father; Posthumus has even increased these sufferings by the foolish wager which he allowed himself to be persuaded to make, and this false step even threatens to become the ruin of his noble nature. But the fate which he arranged for himself, the death which he wished to meet of his own free will, is changed—by the counterplay of accident and the intrigues of others—into happiness and life. On the other hand, all sufferings, all temptations, machinations and snares pass by Imogen without disturbing the mirror of her pure, true womanliness. She is one of the most beautiful, most ideal of Shakspeare's female characters, of whom Mrs. Jameson justly remarks that in her 'we must imagine something of the romantic enthusiasm of Juliet, of the truth and constancy of Helen, of the dignified purity of Isabel, of the tender sweetness

of Viola, of the self-possession and intellect of Portia—combined together so equally and so harmoniously, that we can scarcely say that one quality predominates over the other, . . . and thus while she resembles each of these characters individually, she stands wholly distinct from all.' Imogen, by virtue of her rich and yet harmonious nature, is the mirror of genuine womanliness and, at the same time, the mirror which most clearly reflects the fundamental idea of the drama. She has no plans and intentions, either as regards her own life or that of others, she everywhere follows but the inclination of her pure heart, and accordingly she alone attains pure happiness, undimmed by remorse or any of the darker shadows of recollection.

In sharp contrast to her, we have, on the one hand, the Queen, and on the other Iachimo, the cunning, intriguing deceiver, who is corrected by the deep misery which he prepares for others and for himself. Belarius, however, whose first intentions were only revenge and destruction, has unconsciously and involuntarily saved the two princes from the Queen's clutches, and, contrary to his original plan—which he was unable to carry out in opposition to his own better nature—has trained them into splendid youths in every way worthy of being rulers; this at the same time determines the happy close of his own life. Pisanio, the faithful, honest servant, has always the intention of doing good, but, owing to his thorough measures, brings suffering and peril upon those whom it was his endeavour to save and reunite. Cymbeline, lastly, the husband, father and king—who is more or less directly affected by the complications in the lives of all the others, hence as it were, the point where all the radii of the wide circle meet, and from which they in the first instance proceed, and upon whom everything turns although he himself appears the least active—he forms the quiescent centre of the action, and in his undutiful lassitude and passiveness regulates the fortunes of all, but is ultimately obliged to take all their fortunes upon himself. The drama, therefore, very justly bears his name.

This interpretation of the piece—which it seems to me

makes all the heterogeneous elements harmonise with one another—leaves unanswered but the one question, as to what is the meaning of the appearance of the gods and spirits in act v. 4. I cannot help thinking that the scene is a mistake on Shakspeare's part. It is indeed evident that the poet's object was to intimate that the true power of destiny, which arranges the confused threads of human plans and resolves, deeds and sufferings, and which ties and loosens the complication with an invisible hand, is the divine dispensation of things; and in so far the scene confirms our interpretation of the drama as a whole. But inasmuch as the poet represents this divine power in a *direct* manner and brings it on to the very stage, he not only disturbs the course of the action, but destroys its dramatic character which inexorably demands that although a higher guidance shall arrange and dispose outward events, circumstances and relations, the fate of the dramatic personages shall nevertheless be the result of their own characters, their own endeavours and intentions, doings and omissions. It is only when viewed from the standpoint of the epic poet and the epic character of the whole, that the scene can be justified. But this very epic character is in reality a fault. For the consequence is that the drama, notwithstanding its harmonious finish, and the excellent delineation of the characters (more particularly the ideal beauty of the figure of Imogen) is nevertheless wanting in unity of interest. Our sympathy is enlisted from too many quarters, none of the figures stand prominently enough forward to raise our interest into deep, sincere sympathy; the rapid change of the scenes and characters, the multiplicity of the given threads disturb our attention and prevent our sympathy, our pity, our fear and anxiety from gaining firm ground. Besides this there is the fact that in consequence of this epic breadth of the arrangement and fulness of the subject, the complication into which the manifold threads have wound themselves, cannot in the end be solved without a certain degree of violence. For even though we admire the clearness and skill with which the action in the closing scene is led to its appropriate end, still there is so little motive in the

Queen's sudden illness, remorse and contrition, in her public confession of all her criminal designs and actions, in Iachimo's change of sentiments, and in Posthumus being summoned before the King (in spite of his being supposed a common Roman soldier), that we cannot avoid suspecting that all of these incidents are introduced merely to assist in bringing the long piece to a hurried termination.

Accordingly it is only very conditionally that I can agree to the extravagant praise which Gervinus lavishes upon this drama. I would rather concur with Coleridge and Tieck—whose views are shared by Knight—in thinking 'that this varied-woven romantic history had inspired the poet in his youth to try and adapt it to the stage.' This first youthful attempt, which possibly made but a temporary appearance on the stage, Shakspeare may have remodelled long afterwards, towards the end of his poetical career; in the new version the scene with the ghosts and their interview with Jupiter may have been left as it was, perhaps because it had made some impression upon the public, perhaps also for other reasons. Yet as regards language, form and substance, the scene is so distinct and peculiar in character that the majority of the most eminent English critics consider that it was not written by Shakspeare, but an interpolation.

That this remodelling, or—if this hypothesis is thought too presumptuous—that the whole piece belongs to the last years of Shakspeare's poetical activity, admits of no doubt; this opinion is supported not only by the language and versification, but also by the more sombre colouring of the whole, and the deep earnestness which pervades it. Besides this, through the discovery of Dr. Forman's Diary by Collier, it now seems probable that it was performed for the first time in 1610 or 1611. Forman does not, it is true, give the date of the performance of 'Cymbeline' when enumerating the plays he had seen; but he mentions it between two others which he had seen respectively on the 20th of April, 1610, and the 15th of May, 1611, hence it presumably falls to the intermediate period.* Malone †

* Collier, *New Particulars*, etc. p. 22 f.

† In Reed, ii. 333 f.

discovered some circumstances which make it seem probable that 'Cymbeline' and 'Macbeth' may have been written pretty much about the same time, and accordingly assigns it to 1605, which conjecture is shared by Chalmers and Drake, except that the former assigns both pieces to 1606. However, as it is not exactly probable that Forman would have carefully described and characterised old pieces that had been known for years, and as accordingly, the most likely conjecture is that 'Macbeth' was first brought upon the stage in 1610, I am inclined to believe that 'Cymbeline' was first performed somewhere towards the beginning of 1611. It did not appear in print till 1623.

The sources which supplied the subject-matter of 'Cymbeline,' cannot be determined with any certainty. The old English chronicles of Galfred of Monmouth and Holinshed do, it is true, speak of a semi-mythical King Cymbeline with two sons, Guiderius and Arviragus. But Shakspeare got no more from them than the mere names, the few historical allusions and the approximate period in which the story is played. The old French Miracle play, '*Miracle de Nostre Dame, comment Otes, roy d'Espaigne, perdi sa terre,*' etc., and its probable source the '*Roman du roi Flore et de la belle Jehanne,*'* do indeed turn upon an intrigue quite similar to the story of the wager between Posthumus and Iachimo; nay, they even contain a couple of features not met with in other well-known versions of the story. And yet it is surely too unlikely that Shakspeare could have known of old French compositions belonging to the fourteenth century. These prove only that the subject, in so far as it concerns the wager, was a very old and popular favourite, and that Shakspeare possibly knew of some earlier and as yet undiscovered French version of it. But he might also have borrowed it from one of Boccaccio's novels,† and perhaps accidentally agreed with the old French sources in those two features which do not exist in Boccaccio. At all events Boccaccio's novel seems the more likely source, although even in this case

* In Monmerqué et Michel: *Théâtre Français au Moyen-Age*, pp. 417 f. 431 f.

† *Decameron*, ii. 9.

the deviations are so marked that they are pretty much the same thing as a new invention.* No source, however, has been found for the connection of the romance with the history of Cymbeline, the Queen, Cloten and Belarius; all this, and thus in reality the invention of the piece, is probably Shakspeare's own. The old book entitled 'Westward for Smelts,' from which, as Steevens says, a part of the story is taken, I do not know. Halliwell† gives a short extract from it, but thinks that Steevens must have been mistaken in maintaining that the book appeared as early as 1603, as there is absolutely no trace of an edition earlier than 1620.

* Compare Simrock, *l.c.*, i. 179 f, iii. 205 f.—Grimm, *Altdeutsche Wälder*, i. 27 f.

† *The First Sketch of Shakspeare's Merry Wives of Windsor*. London: printed for the Shakspeare Society, 1842, p. 135 f.

BOOK VI.

SHAKSPEARE'S HISTORICAL DRAMAS.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

IN considering the thirteen dramas which I have classed together under this head, it is above all things necessary to determine what is the idea of an historical drama, as conceived by Shakspeare. The idea touches upon the relation subsisting between poetry and history, and has been interpreted in various ways from this point of view. But in whatever manner the question be decided, this at least seems to me indubitable, that the only poem which can bear the name of an *historical* drama is one which does not—as might be supposed—make arbitrary use of the historical matter, considering it mere material to be employed at will for its own purposes by free alterations, but one that gives a faithful and essentially unaltered picture of actual history, such as is invariably found in Shakspeare. It does certainly seem as if poetry, in doing this, would renounce its independence and thereby its higher aims—its striving towards truth in the garb of beauty, its vocation of elevating the soul above common reality—and degrade itself into the mere handmaid of history whose object would be better served by the prosaic representation of the professional historian. But as soon as the historical drama is truly historical, this either does not happen at all, or at least only in the sense in which it ought to happen, *i.e.* in which everything that exists serves the course and aim of history.

The object of an historical drama can only be to give a clear artistic representation of the historical *idea* which pervades a circle of facts as their hidden vital principle, that is, of the inner significance of the historical events and thus of the true nature of history itself. The historical idea in its substance is, however, not only *ethical*, but for this very reason always *poetical* as well: it can only be a principle of the developing *ideality* of the human mind and life, it can only denote a stage in the process in which human existence evolves its real character (which is also its ideal beauty), in which it realises its object and attains its immanent end; for this process is, in fact, history itself. And by the historical idea—in accordance with this its poetical character—becoming the formative principle of the drama, the idea, as well as the poem itself, acquires the artistic *form*, the form of beauty which alone gives to the whole the impress of a work of art. Accordingly in taking up the historical idea, poetry is only taking possession of its rightful property; in attending to the historical subject-matter, so far as the latter expresses the idea (and only in so far is it genuine *historical matter*), it is but respecting its own laws; in accommodating itself to history, it is but serving its own nature and purposes, *i.e.* it is as free as it can be without becoming untrue to itself. The historical idea is that point where the inviolable independence of history—with the destruction of which the historical drama ceases to be historical—meets with the equally inviolable freedom of poetry—with the destruction of which it ceases to be poetical; an historical drama is possible only by means of the historical idea. It is self-evident that in holding fast to it, the historical drama must, with equal fidelity also hold fast to those incidents, characters, deeds and events in which the historical idea is historically embodied; for instance, it would not only be inappropriate but unreasonable and destructive of the poetical effect, to attempt to represent the Duke of Alba in the form of a Marquis Posa. For this very reason, however, it is no less a matter of course that the poet has perfect freedom over everything that the historical idea has left untouched; as for instance, over the accidental, secondary circumstances

of the action, the individual, subordinate peculiarities of the characters, the distances of time and place, &c., in short, over the whole sphere of what is historically accidental and arbitrary. Further, that he can change or omit things as he pleases, without thereby becoming unhistorical; for such things as may be historical or otherwise, may also be poetical or otherwise without altering the course and aim of history. Lastly it is equally a matter of course that neither history nor any earthly power can compel the poet to respect historical truth in any one point; history stands no higher than poetry, and has no power over the latter, except in so far as poetry itself is a part of the great whole, the life and movement of which constitutes history. When, however, the poet is unable to discover the historical idea in an historical subject, or unable to represent it poetically in its historical realisation, he has then no right to call his drama historical, or, what is the same thing, to give his characters and actions historical names. History, in this case, can accuse him before the judgment-seat of truth—which is as much poetical as historical—of *untruth*, and this is as great a reproach against a poetical composition as against an historical representation.

If, accordingly, an historical drama is neither a mere dramatisation of any historical subject, nor a free invention with historical names, but a dramatised representation of an historical *idea* in its *historical* realisation, then according to Shakspeare's idea of the nature of the drama, the meaning and object of the historical drama essentially coincides with the idea of dramatic art in general. For, 'to show the age and body of the time his form and pressure,' is and can only be to exhibit the ideas, motives and aims which agitated the age, and animated the body of the time, in the leading personalities as their representatives; in no other form can 'the body of the time,' *i.e.* the diversified and many-membered totality of the events of the time, circumstances and relations, be depicted in the narrow frame of a dramatic composition. However, this object cannot be attained in an historical drama by the same *method* as in a free dramatic composition. The latter—which can choose its subject at will, or, at least, form it freely in

accordance with its own purposes—can interweave the idea so intimately with the characters of the dramatic personages and with the motives of the dramatic action, that the outward deed and its significance is *directly, entirely, and completely* reflected in the personality of the dramatic characters, and these again in the former. In history, on the other hand, there reigns a progressive development—according to general laws, norms and aims—which extends far beyond the life and the personal influence of individual men. The individual man can, it is true, influence this course with free self-determination, either promoting or checking it; it is only by the aid and influence of individual men as such, that the advance of history itself is effected. But nevertheless this influence is but a single, integral part in the organism of the diversified whole; the latter marches irresistibly forwards, it comes to no actual conclusion, even with the full influence of individual men. In history we meet only with more or less important, although always more or less arbitrary, divisions. Therefore in an historical drama—in so far as it is actually intended to be historical—the importance of the dramatic characters in regard to the action as a whole, and consequently the lyric or subjective element of the drama must of necessity retire more to the background; the epic element must necessarily preponderate to a certain extent, in obedience to the higher power and authority of the general (objective) laws and aims of the historical development. Conversely, we have a so-called domestic comedy or tragedy (generally a pathetic, sentimental piece) where the drama, so to say, tears itself from ‘the body of the time,’ *i.e.*, from the organism of history as a whole, and moves in a narrow, definitely bounded sphere represented for its own purposes, and where it makes the development of the action essentially dependent upon the sentiments of the several personages,—in short, where it allows the lyric or subjective side of the drama to prevail.

Whatever, accordingly, the historical drama necessarily loses in perfect dramatic composition, especially in point of form, is abundantly compensated for in another respect; for in accordance with its nature it is not definitely shut

up within itself, but the preponderance of the epic element extends, so to say, beyond itself, is readily connected with a second and third drama, and thus becomes a special part in a living, organic whole, and is enabled to represent history in a wider range, in grander proportions and relations, after the manner of an epos. For the general relations and conditions of *nations*—out of which, in reality proceed the leading ideas of history, the principal motives of the further historical development—of course, invariably survive the personal influence of *individual men*; the dethronement of Richard II., for instance, is directly followed by the accession of Henry IV., without immediately producing any fundamental change in the general political condition of England. In so far every genuine historical drama points directly to a following one; for in accordance with its nature it appears but a single link in a chain formed of general conditions and relations in the progressive development of historical life. A *cycle* of this kind—into which the historico-dramatic composition has, with a certain degree of necessity to form itself—gives us a closer and more direct insight into that which is general, into the spirit and character of whole nations and ages, which otherwise can be expressed only in the sentiments and actions of individuals. The state, the nationality, nay, humanity itself, appears, so to say, more clearly and distinctly represented in a living person, that is, as a freely-moving organism of manifold, independent parts; the sublime work of art representing the world's history, is unfolded in sharper outlines before our eyes. In the wider circle of time and space which is thus opened up to us, the personal influence of the individual also acquires a higher significance. For we see that an act—by continuing to exist in its effects and consequences—reaches far beyond the life of its originator, and herein only do we recognize its inmost nature; we shudder at the thought of the lasting, serious and terrible effects of that which, apparently, perhaps, small and trifling, was the birth of a moment. And nowhere is our soul more powerfully affected by the warning that a man does not die with his earthly decease, but that his life

continues in his actions, even without his will or interference.

History, as such, is in itself and its outward appearance, neither tragic nor comic; it becomes one or the other only by the particular view under which the human mind internally connects and comprises the several moments of its course. The tragic destruction as well as the comic evanescence of the life and actions of *individual* men, do not possess any independent value in history, they count but as passing moments of the whole and are of importance only in so far as they exercise influence upon the whole and its development. Although under different aspects *this whole* shows itself sometimes as tragic, sometimes as comic, it cannot itself be conceived either as a tragedy or a comedy; for, as both sides are but contained *within* it, it must itself necessarily rise above both. History, as a whole, has, in fact, no poetical physiognomy, but one purely its own, *i.e.* one absolutely *historical*; it presents a face and an aspect in which are united all the characteristic features of human nature—the poetical and artistic as well as the religious, moral and philosophical, etc. And, in so far as the ultimate object of history extends beyond the finite and earthly existence of every individual, it appears to give a reflex of that full and perfect truth which regards the individual man, not as existing for himself, but as an organic part of the whole human race, and the latter not merely from the side of its transitory and temporary existence, but from its eternal, unchangeable state of being. Accordingly, the tragic ruin of what is noble, great and beautiful in man, and the comic paralysis of human weakness, littleness and frailty, are here united in the one thought, that *all* that which is human must perish in order to attain true, everlasting life. And hence the destruction of the individual no longer exercises its full force, because, in fact, the whole continues to subsist in indestructible vitality; the comic paralysis of the perversities and follies of individuals also, no longer possesses its full weight, because the whole reveals itself in enduring force and greatness.

This historical view of life, however, becomes poetical

in the higher sense, from the very fact that it includes both the tragic and the comic elements, as special sides of an organic unity. For it comprises what is poetical in both respects; it does not represent truth under the form of any one particular view, nor as divided into its two principal elements, but in its entire completeness. The historical drama not only shows that the *individual*—when purified by the tragic pathos—rises up out of suffering and death into a higher state, into the form of ideal beauty, even though this is always but of a purely individual colouring; not only does it show that the comic paralysis of human follies and perversities, results in what is good and thus again in what is beautiful—even though in a veiled form; but it also shows that whole *nations*, and thus that *humanity* itself develops through tragic pathos and comic paralysis into a higher, more ideal form of life; that, accordingly, *general* foundations, relations and institutions—the conditions of an existence worthy of man—approach in progressive development nearer and ever nearer to the form of beauty, because it is that of morality. The historical drama, in its cyclic form, therefore combines not only the serious, sublime beauty of tragedy with the light, playful gracefulness of comedy, but, at the same time rises above both these forms of beauty (which invariably show but the *individual* person in an ideal form) and thus acquires a beauty of greater and more general significance. For the customs and institutions of a nation, of church and state, and the relation of nations among one another, likewise possess an ideal form as the life-giving principle of their construction, and this, when brought into shape, is the highest and most spiritual form of beauty, the condition of all beauty in special cases, containing every beauty of the individual as its motive power. The great and important duty of the historical poet is, with prophetic spirit to find out this ideal and its form, and to make it shine through the cyclic body of the historical drama as well as through its individual parts.

Further, while tragedy represents the human mind and its freedom more with regard to the necessity which it itself contains, comedy more with regard to its sub-

jective self-determination—through purely personal interests and intentions led by caprice and fancy—the historical poem again, comprises both sides. By revealing the irresistible advance of the human race towards its final goal, the historical drama gives a direct manifestation of the freedom of the mind, which is, in fact, nothing but the inward impulse, the longing of the mind urging it towards its goal, and the oneness of the self-determination with this goal. By representing the downfall of human caprice and selfishness, the frustration of human plans and resolves, which, in fact, are wrecked on the irresistible advance of history, it thereby reveals the internal vanity of *mere* subjective freedom, which exists only in order, by punishment and ruin, to exalt the nature of true freedom to steel its power by struggle and opposition, and to promote its realisation.

Tragedy and comedy, lastly, are confined to the Present, to the life of the dramatic characters. Both, therefore, can describe human free-will only from one point of view: tragedy exhibits it as a creative, causal activity, which contains within itself all its effects, so that all consequences necessarily fall back upon the head of the doer. Comedy, on the other hand, exhibits it more in its finiteness and limitation, where the realisation of its aspirations appears dependent upon external circumstances and relations, and upon the co-operation of other persons, so that, for this very reason, the *deed* is annulled in its consequences and converted into its opposite. The historical drama, however, combines *both* points of view. Here, the deed appears as the independent act of the creative freedom of the will, determining the fate of the doer, but at the same time we also see that its effects—by being conditioned and borne by history as a great whole, and by reaching far beyond the life and intention of the doer—frequently become changed and lead to very different results from what he had contemplated. Accordingly, a *single* historical drama *may* create either a tragic or a comic effect, but it *need* not have either effect; neither the one nor the other is indispensable to it (for instance, it would be difficult to say whether 'Henry IV,' First and Second

Parts, 'Henry V.' and 'Henry VIII.' were meant to be tragedies or comedies). On the contrary, so far as the historical drama is essentially but a member of one great organic whole, it *ought* to have a different effect, *i.e.* the poetico-historical effect which raises humanity above both the tragic and the comic view of life.

The creator of this grand historico-dramatic style of poetry, in which the idea constituting the basis of the trilogical form of Greek tragedy appears conceived and carried out in a higher sense, is Shakspeare. He was the first distinctly to recognise the true nature of the historical drama, the necessity of its cyclic character, he was the first to rise above the usual forms and divisions (which in 'Hamlet,' ii. 2, are the subjects of such fine raillery), and, moreover, what he recognised he was also able to work out into forms which will be models for all ages. Accordingly he has—even though unintentionally yet led on by the instinct of his genius—divided his historical dramas into two great cycles, and dramatically carried ancient and modern history through the principal stages of their development. The first cycle of Roman plays, brings before us the political life and the history of the progress of the Roman people (the basis of modern political life) in all its essential moments; '*Coriolanus*' gives us the contests between the plebeians and patricians and the progressive development of the republic; '*Julius Caesar*,' the last, fruitless struggles of the dying republic with the rise of the new monarchical form of government; '*Antony and Cleopatra*,' the downfall of the oligarchy and the nature of the empire; '*Titus Andronicus*,' the inevitable decay of the ancient spirit and position of the Roman empire, in face of the Germanic nations, and the new principle of life which the latter introduced into the political history of Europe. For although '*Titus Andronicus*' is *not* one of the actual historical dramas, it ~~may~~ nevertheless, to some extent, be included among them here, inasmuch as it is semi-historical in so far as it represents, not indeed any real actions and characters, but still a definite period in an historical colouring, and therefore its interpretation is to be found only in the character of that epoch. The whole cycle shows us the lofty power and virtue of a

mighty empire, of a great nation, but also its deep, tragic decay. However, the tragic pathos cannot produce its full effect here; for, as in the case of every separate tragedy, the tragic fate of the hero finds its compensation in the new life which arises thence to the whole nation, so the cycle closes in a truly historical spirit by gently pointing to the new glory of European humanity, which was to be developed within the sphere of the Germanic family of nations.

The second and larger cycle—consisting of the ten dramas from English history—gives us, first of all, an insight into the perplexing workings of the forces and aspirations active during the Middle Ages. From the important reign of King John—to which England owes her Magna Charta, the fundamental law of her whole constitution—English history is carried down to the days of Henry VIII., in whose reign we have the regeneration of the nation and the beginning of a more definite development in the spirit of modern political life. Here too, accordingly, the whole cycle shows us the principal moments of the political life and progressive history of England, in which are reflected the fundamental features of the historical development of the European nations down to Shakspeare's own day. In '*King John*' we are still in the midst of the Middle Ages. Feudalism, in its chief features, is distinctly prominent: knights, barons, and earls asserting their freedom and rights against the authority of the sovereign; political life aspiring to a more definite form; warfare but as a knightly tournament, dependent upon the personal valour of individual heroes; the helplessness of political prudence, as opposed to the youthful strength of momentary feelings, emotions and passions; chivalry and corporations, but above all the power of the Church, governing the spirit of the times, and the main levers of historical events. Thus, as Schlegel justly remarks, '*King John*' forms the prologue to the eight succeeding dramas, in which are depicted the great wars, party feuds and disturbances which, from the time of the dethronement of Richard II. to the death of Richard III., had torn and distracted, but, at the same time, internally strengthened the power of England. We are here shown (more than

could be the case in a regular tragedy) the tragic power of a single act in its far-reaching consequences. All the wars, party feuds, and civic broils which devastated England for nearly a century, were the result of the reckless and worthless behaviour of young *Richard II.* and his dethronement by *Henry IV.* But even the latter had to defend his usurped royal power against the rebellious barons. *Henry V.*, upon his accession, tries to efface the flaw in his title by the brilliancy of his deeds; these considerations and his own heroism, induce him to undertake the great war against France, which, as long as he himself wielded sword and sceptre, was indeed crowned with brilliant success, but subsequently became a wasting sore to England, and, owing to its long duration, undermined the external welfare of two great kingdoms.

The reign of *Henry VI.*, as unhappy as it was long, Shakspeare has made the subject of a great dramatic trilogy. The tragic fate of this pious, good-hearted, well-meaning, but extremely weak king, is still the consequence of the curse, which his grandfather's wrong against *Richard II.* had brought upon his head. His life and character are, so to say, the reflex of the truth, which can never be sufficiently taken to heart, that, in human life the question is not *what* a man does, but *how* he does it. Although *Henry VI.*'s energy appears so weak, so dependent, and so unworthy of a king, that, regarding it in this light, it is difficult to repress our indignation, still the spirit which induces him to act as he does, is so pure and beautiful, that we are forced to give him our deepest sympathy. A pious, peaceful and affectionate disposition is surrounded by all the horrors of hate, of discord and passion which cling to the throne that has been unlawfully acquired by blood and murder; a mind more fitted by nature to be a monk or a priest than a king, is called upon by history to be the leader of a stormy period, to be the ruler of a kingdom dissolved in war and dissension. We here find that which has been looked for in '*Hamlet*:' a duty enforced upon the soul of one who was unfitted for it. Here, however, the relation has a different meaning, an object and a significance that are wanting in *Hamlet*. For *Henry VI.* is oppressed by a heavy, crushing burden,

partly from reasons of the past, in so far as the remembrance of his grandfather's crime is kept alive by his maintaining the usurped sovereignty, and partly from reasons of the future in so far as the foreign and civil wars (especially the bloody Wars of the Roses which Henry was too weak to suppress) broke the power of the contending vassals; the result being that the Feudal system of the Middle Ages decayed within itself, to make room for a new form of government, different both in nature and substance. This is the important advance of English history which was completed in the reign of Henry VI., and for the realisation of which such a reign was peculiarly adapted.

In '*Richard III.*' we then have the close of the great tragic whole into which these eight dramas have naturally formed themselves. Old, as well as recent wrongs are atoned for by the terrible murderous crimes of Richard III., which prove his own ruin and that of all the other guilty parties: Richard is the blood-thirsty executioner who carries out the great punishment upon all, in order finally to fall a victim to it himself. The severely chastised country longs for rest and peace; the great barons have exhausted their powers and resources in the long struggle, and therefore it is an easy matter for Henry VII., in his long and peaceful reign, to pave the way for the new historical era which became more firmly established and more definitely developed under *Henry VIII.* Of the drama which bears his name, we can here only say that (as Schlegel observes) it forms the epilogue to the great tragedy, the object of which was to point to the new stage of life entered upon by the English nation during the reign of the father of the great Elizabeth and still more so during her own life-time.

Thus the two cycles in themselves again form two great dramatic works of art, in which every single drama has its definite position as a part of the whole. In the preceding remarks, therefore, I have endeavoured merely to indicate the meaning which each might possess in this dependence, and in its relation to the whole. But each is, at the same time, an independent work of art, and must, accordingly, have its own ideal centre and point of unity;

and this point of unity must moreover be enclosed in the meaning, appropriate to it as a member of the cyclic whole, and yet have a distinct character of its own, and contain a substance of general significance. To point this out in regard to each individual drama, will be my task in the following disquisition.

CHAPTER II.

CORIOLANUS.

THE Roman plays belong to the sphere of clear, plastic antiquity, and we shall find that their inner centre also stands out with a certain degree of plastic definiteness and clearness. Yet they have frequently been misunderstood. Thus it is quite erroneous to suppose that 'Coriolanus' is merely a representation of party spirit in its historical significance. The factious element, *i.e.* the pursuit of personal interests under the cloak of some general motive, is indeed introduced, but is not the actual lever of the action. The main thing is the struggle between the two opposite principles of a republican polity—the aristocratic and the democratic. These principles can come into conflict only where heroic greatness, manly worth, and moral power are still looked upon as gifts of nature, consequently as dependent upon noble birth, or where the consciousness of the equal rights of all men is beginning to make itself felt, because of their equal moral and mental capacities; they can only come into conflict where ancient rights—which, through abuse, have become doubtful or even partially lost—are to be protected from total extinction, or where new claims—called forth by a changed state of the consciousness of right—rebel against the ancient rights. The struggle does not only mark a transition stage in the republican polity, but also a new phase of legal and moral consciousness.

A transition stage of this kind in the history of the Roman people forms the foundation of the present drama. Not only is the state itself, but the consciousness of right in the nation is divided. Coriolanus, with the patricians on the one hand, the tribunes and the people on the other, are the chief supporters of the action. Coriolanus, it is true, is by no means free from personal pride and ambition, and

yet his foremost wish at all times is but the good of his country; to it, in self-destructive valour, he sacrifices himself, regardless of all consequences, and even the war which he brings upon his country is meant only to save it from the impending disgrace of falling into the hands of the populace. For a plebeian government, in his eyes, is the greatest of misfortunes. He considers all political rights as connected with birth, because it includes all virtues—love of country, valour and nobility of mind; he represents the ancient consciousness of right which does not acknowledge any general rights, but only such as are special, primarily acquired by services rendered, or conquered by superior force, and then become hereditary. He is therefore the pure embodiment of the aristocratic principle; his whole life, his resolves and actions are absorbed in it. It is not so much his personal pride as the pride of caste that, in him, appears carried to that pitch where it collapses in itself, but it is based upon the equally lofty and truly grand nobility of his nature. This is the cause of the harshness, the stubbornness and the passionate vehemence with which he rejects every compromise, every demand which he regards as derogatory; this is the cause of his contempt of the common herd, which certainly here, as everywhere, appears vulgar, but he, being prejudiced, does not perceive the better elements it contains, its aristocratic nature which is already becoming developed. This contempt is as immoderate, as exaggerated, as his pride and admiration of true personal dignity and virtue. But notwithstanding his heroic greatness, notwithstanding his truly aristocratic sentiments—in which he not only wishes to be considered the first and best, but intends *to be* the best, the first and greatest—and notwithstanding the fact that he, in reality, *is* what he intends to be, he nevertheless comes to an untimely end, and justly so. For the very fact of his being such an inveterate aristocrat, boasting only of civil virtue and political privileges, only of political dignity and greatness, the very fact of his so entirely forgetting the *man* in the citizen and aristocrat, is the cause of the fate that befalls him. And his fate does not come upon him from without, is not the result of the superior strength of his opponents or of unpropitious circumstances,

it comes upon him in a truly tragic manner, as the consequence of his own nature and character, and of his own actions and aspirations. Man *ought* not to make himself a mere reflex of his birth, of his descent, or of his legal and political position; he ought not to be wholly engrossed in any so-called principle, or self-made law. For in his inmost nature he stands *above* such *forms*, above all such formative principles of political life, of which one may be better than another, but which are all mere empty husks when devoid of the general nature of right and morality with which they ought to be filled. Coriolanus, in fact, defends mere external, formal rights, as opposed to the aristocratic principle which he himself represents. According to his conception there should exist no right except where noble birth confers nobility of mind, moral power, and political wisdom. But the rights which he defends are rights of political *supremacy*, *privileges* which can be exercised even without virtue and wisdom, and have been exercised to the detriment of the whole. His truly aristocratic sentiments, therefore, stand in contradiction with the political principle which he defends and carries out in resolves and actions; his aristocratic sentiments, his genuine heroism and civil virtues, therefore, become the snare into which he falls. And because he is one-sided in his prejudice, because he places man so completely below the citizen, the general principle of humanity avenges itself upon him; the simplest, the most natural and the most human relations are the very ones which work his ruin. For he cannot resist the general feelings of filial, conjugal and paternal love. The very fact of his so one-sidedly placing all weight upon birth and descent, proves his tragic fate; his own mother, who is as aristocratic in her pride, as high-minded but more patriotic, and far more given to follow her own feelings, is the cause of his death. Yielding to his love for her, and to her eloquent entreaties, he makes peace with Rome, and retreats with the Volscian army, although he is well aware that in doing so he must inevitably meet with his death.

It is upon this fundamental thought that the whole action turns. It contains—as already intimated—the

tragic conflict which qualifies the historical drama to become a pathetic tragedy. Here, as in Shakspeare throughout, the political is met by the ethical, moral element. It is for political reasons alone (because Rome has fallen into the power of the populace) that Coriolanus wages war against his native city; but the political element cannot be so entirely separated from the ethical and general element of human nature as he thinks. By threatening his own country, he also threatens his own house; by tearing himself away from the former, he at the same time breaks his family bond; by valuing the political form (from a purely political standpoint) more than the political *substance*, *i.e.* more than the spiritual and physical welfare of the citizens, he destroys the welfare of the latter as well as that of his own family; in short, by endeavouring only to preserve his political rights, and to do his political duty, he violates the moral duty of patriotism, as well as the love and affection due towards mother, wife and child. It is true that, in the end, the moral feeling does overcome his political rigorism; but the violation of the moral law weighs too heavily, and penetrates too deeply, for him to repair what he has injured; even though he had not fallen a victim to the revengeful spirit of the Volscians, his life would nevertheless have been utterly ruined.

The opponents of Coriolanus, however, appear also involved in a similar conflict, a similar contradiction. Even the people, now and again, forget their political part, their democratic aspirations, and the poet—with an unmistakable touch of irony—shows us that it is partly hunger, partly an irresistible human feeling of respect for a great character that carries off the victory over the democratic principle. Did not the well-known fable of old Menenius Agrippa—about the quarrel between the belly and the other members of the body—suffice to quell a revolt? Shakspeare has been censured for having—out of predilection for the aristocracy, perhaps even for some flattering consideration to his public, to his great and noble patrons and friends—placed the people so much in the shade compared with Coriolanus and the Roman patricians, that they almost invariably present but a

ludicrous appearance. However, Hazlitt * justly remarks that 'the imagination is an exaggerating and exclusive faculty,' delighting in greatness and in so far aristocratic; and again that the principle of poetry is a very anti-levelling principle—that a lion hunting a flock of sheep or a herd of wild asses is a more poetical object than they; and that we admire a proud self-willed man more than the small-minded multitude which bends before him. Gervinus, on the other hand, draws attention to the fact that when more closely examined Shakspeare does not at all so exclusively favour the aristocratic principle, that he rather introduces us to that better and braver portion of the people who, when the captain calls, follow him in a body, to his joy and exultation; that the poet shows clearly how the service rendered by Coriolanus is deeply felt and acknowledged by the whole people, that their zeal to greet the victor with shouts of admiration was universal, and their attachment to him great; further, that even the sorely oppressed and rebellious people admit that he was not avaricious and not more proud than brave, that they thought little of his arrogance on account of the natural power of his mind, and acknowledge that the greatness of his services exceeds their power of refusing him the highest honour; lastly, that the people, when left to themselves, do not (as the friends of Coriolanus expect) quarrel among themselves, but that peace and concord prevails. Gervinus † adds: 'If fickleness be an attribute of the populace in all ages, this fault has also its good side, which is directly opposed to the unbending obstinacy of the aristocrat; the populace, owing to this attribute, becomes a manageable mass, which a wise man like Menenius can lead; if it is easily aroused, it is as easily pacified, and this attribute of ready forgiveness Menenius himself was obliged to praise in his countrymen.' I think, however, that Shakspeare is in no need of any justification for not having placed the plebs, as a political party, on a level with the patricians, and for having presented them to us in their natural human aspect, with their natural human weaknesses and virtues—which are

* *A Specimen of a Commentary on Shakspeare.*

† *Shakspeare Commentaries*, p. 751.

ever predominant in the people as such ; neither does the poet require to be justified for having laid more stress upon the former than upon the latter, and, in accordance with this, for having stamped their leaders—the tribunes—demagogues, and as endeavouring by intrigues to make the plebs a political party, to raise them to political greatness. For it is just this contrast between the political and the natural in man that forms the central point upon which the whole drama turns ; Shakspeare required such a people because his object was to give a full and vivid representation of the nature and character of the aristocracy within this general contrast. Lastly, the same cause that proves the ruin of Coriolanus leads to the mother losing her son, the wife her husband and the son his father. The same political virtue, which is the pride of the whole race of the Marcii, and even penetrates and inspires their women, forces the mother and wife (because in them it is not clouded by passion, and asserts itself in a purer and more disinterested manner) to become untrue to themselves and to entreat for that which is *opposed* to the life of the son, and husband.

That ‘Coriolanus’ is one of Shakspeare’s later works is seen at once, by a glance at the language, composition and character of the whole. Perhaps even the greatest and best of the poets of our own day—in spite of their higher culture and more accurate knowledge of ancient life—would not succeed in producing so intelligible, clear and truthful a picture of ancient history in a dramatic form, except in the fullest power of mature manhood. Not that the ancient mind—as has been supposed—is too grand and exalted for modern poetry ; on the contrary, the modern poet will find it less easy to descend to the naturalness and plastic simplicity of ancient life with its consistent, vigorous culture, the more that, in youthful enthusiasm, he aspires to the modern ideal. It requires the intellect, the calmness and self-possession of the man thoroughly to understand the leading thoughts, the spirit and the significance of the history of so-called classic antiquity. It cannot, indeed, be maintained that Shakspeare’s Roman plays are pervaded by a *purely* antique spirit ;—this, in fact, is an impossibility as long as history

does not run backwards. A descending is no ascending, and however much the mind may transfer itself into past conditions, it cannot perfectly comprehend their organic growth out of their own peculiar soil. If a purely antique spirit is wanted, it may be found in the old dramatists. Modern poetry can view and represent the antique spirit only as reflected in the mirror of its own spirit. If this be borne in mind, we shall have to admit—what, indeed, is generally acknowledged—that Shakspeare's Roman plays are models of historico-dramatic composition which stand unrivalled, and are the more deserving of admiration, as, notwithstanding their most faithful, almost literal rendering of the historical matter (such as Shakspeare found in North's translation of Plutarch which appeared in 1579) they produce the greatest dramatic effect. Accordingly I have no occasion to contradict the general supposition that 'Coriolanus' may have been written about 1609.

CHAPTER III.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

WHAT has been most censured in 'Julius Cæsar' is that the piece suffers from a very undramatic form of composition inasmuch as it obviously falls into two halves, of which the one represents the death of Cæsar, the other the history of Brutus and Cassius. And certainly the external composition is defective, in so far as in the first half the action turns upon the fall of Cæsar and in the second upon the fate of Brutus and Cassius, and our interest, therefore, is divided, being at first fixed upon Cæsar, afterwards upon Brutus and Cassius. Yet both halves are nevertheless externally connected in so far as the subject of the action in the first part is not so much Cæsar's death, as, in reality, the conspiracy against his supreme power and the attempt to restore the Republic; in the second, we have the course and unhappy termination of this undertaking.

The unity of interest in a free dramatic poem, however, does not necessarily require to be a purely personal one; in this case the interest—just because it is dramatic—is first of all connected with the action, springs forth out of it, and rises and falls with it. And even though the free dramatic poem is the more perfect in form and composition, the more it manages to concentrate the interest of the action in the one person of the hero, still the historical drama is not bound by exactly the same laws as the freely invented composition. In the *historical* drama, the interest—if it is to be *historical*—must above all things be truly historical, then it will be truly poetic as well. History, however, in a certain sense does not trouble itself about persons; its chief interest is in historical facts and their meaning. Now in 'Julius Cæsar' we have absolutely only one point of interest, a

true, but variously-jointed unity. One and the same thought is reflected in the fall of Cæsar, in the deaths of Brutus and Cassius, and in the victory of Antony and Octavius. No man, even though he were as mighty as Cæsar and as noble as Brutus, is sufficiently great to guide history according to his own will; every one, according to his vocation, may contribute his stone to the building of the grand whole, but let no one presume to think that he can, with impunity, experiment with it. The great Cæsar, however, merely experimented when he allowed the royal crown to be offered to him, and then rejected it thrice against his own will. He could not curb his ambition—this history might perhaps have pardoned—but he did not understand her, and attempted that which she, at the time at least, did not yet wish. The consequence of this error which was entirely his own, the consequence of this arrogant presumption which the still active republican spirit, the old Roman love and pride of freedom, stirred up against him, proved his downfall. But Brutus and Cassius erred also, by imagining that Rome could be kept in its glory and preserved from its threatening ruin simply by the restoration of the republic; as if the happiness, the power and the greatness of a state depended upon its form, and as if a single man could repair a nation's demoralisation by a mere word of command. And as Cæsar had thought life unendurable without the outward dignity of the royal throne, so they imagined life not worth having without the honour of outward freedom, for they confounded outward with inward moral freedom, or, at all events, omitted to consider that the former can exist only as the result and expression of the latter. They too, experimented with history; Cassius trusted that his ambitious and selfish will, and Brutus, that his noble and self-sacrificing will, would be strong enough to direct the course of history. For both felt that the moral spirit of the Roman nation had sunk too deep to be able in future to govern itself as a Republic; Cassius knew, Brutus, suspected, that the time of the Republic was coming to an end. But in their republican pride, and feeling their republican honour hurt, they thought themselves called upon to make an attempt to save it, they trusted to their

power to be able, as it were, to take it upon their shoulders and so keep its head above water. This was the arrogance which was added to the error, and which spurred them on not only to unreasonable undertakings but to commit a criminal act; and, therefore, they doubly deserved the punishment which befell them. Antony, on the other hand, with Octavius and Lepidus—the talented voluptuary, the clever actor and the good-natured simpleton—although not half so powerful and noble as their opponents, come off victorious, because, in fact, they but followed the course of history and knew how to make use of it. Thus in all the principal parts we have the same leading thought, the same unity in the (historical) interest, except that it is reflected in various ways. But it also shines forth in the secondary parts, in Portia's death, as well as in the fall of Cato, Cicero and the other conspirators; Portia and Cato perish with the noble but erring Brutus, who desires only what is good, the others with the selfish Cassius, who thinks only of himself. All perish because they do not understand, but endeavoured arbitrarily to make history, or, as arbitrarily, went round the problem which had to be solved in its own time and 'spoke Greek.' Thus history appears represented from one of its main aspects, in its inner autocratic, active and formative power, by which, although externally formed by individual men, it nevertheless controls and marches over the heads of the greatest of them.

This is the general, ideal point of view from which history appears here to be conceived, and also to determine the fate of the dramatic characters. The special historical condition upon which the whole is founded, is again one of the transition stages in political life, one of the most interesting points of history both in a poetical and historical respect. As 'Coriolanus' forms the transition from the aristocratic to the democratic form of government, here it is the transition from the republican to the monarchical, the latter being demanded by the historical circumstances as their stimulating and formative principle. This transition, according to its idea and the position of things, required an intermediate stage, between the republican and the monarchical

form, viz. the oligarchical form, which had been aimed at ever since the days of Sulla, but had hitherto not been able to obtain a legal existence. Regarded from this point of view, Cæsar's death was the necessary consequence of his anti-historical attempt to leap over his intermediate stage. Cæsar was in reality right; monarchy had become a necessity, an historical right. But history will not tolerate any bounds, and where such are made with violence, they are again corrected by retrogressions, so-called reactions. It was accordingly the oligarchical principle, represented by Octavius, Antony and Lepidus, that in reality gained the victory over Cæsar—the representative of the monarchy which was still a thing of the future—as well as over Brutus and Cassius, the representatives of the Republic which was already a thing of the past. It conquered because it had the right of the immediate present on its side.

But, it may be asked, what is the meaning of the introduction of spirits into an *historical* drama? Does it not, in the present case, appear a mere dramatic *bonne bouche* for the multitude? Shakspeare found the ghosts in Plutarch, and retained them in accordance with his principle of following the historical tradition as faithfully as possible, but assuredly not merely out of regard for the historical subject-matter, but doubtless also because it appeared to him to be an important symbol, a significant reference to the actual motive and leading thought in the historical events, and because it, at the same time, seemed to indicate the point where the historico-political cause meets the *ethical* and *moral* cause. This is why Shakspeare makes the ghost—which according to Plutarch appears to Brutus 'as his evil genius'—assume the likeness of Cæsar; this is why—as in Plutarch—he makes it appear to Brutus and not to Cassius. Brutus is of a peaceful and tranquil disposition, truly noble in mind, devoted to the ethical principles of stoicism, desiring only the good and the welfare of his country, a worthy and faithful husband to his high-minded wife, a patriot ready for any sacrifice, but little inclined for energetic action and still less for political activity. Yet he nevertheless allows himself to be so far deluded by Cassius' seductive artifices

and well-calculated eloquence, by the republican fame of his own race—which he thinks it his duty to maintain—and by his own pride in his dignity as a man—which will not bow to any single individual, not even to a Cæsar—that not only does he not see, or ignores the evident signs of the times, but determines (even though after great inward struggles) to commit a deed, the worth of which, in a political respect, is extremely doubtful, because extremely doubtful in its consequences, and which from a moral point of view is undoubtedly equal to a crime. For, apart from the fact that every delicate sense of moral feeling must revolt with horror from a treacherous murder (even though politically justifiable), Brutus, like Coriolanus, tramples upon the most natural and the noblest emotions of the human heart—the duty of gratitude, of esteem and loyalty to Cæsar—for the sake of the phantom-honour of free citizenship. He murders a man who is not only politically great, but who, as a man, had always proved himself great and noble, and who had more especially overwhelmed him with kindness, with proofs of his affection and high esteem. On the other hand, Brutus was the soul of the conspiracy; if his mind became confused, his courage unnerved, the whole enterprise must inevitably collapse. And it did collapse, because it was as much opposed to the moral law as to the will of history.

Accordingly, Shakspeare allows the ghost to play a part in the drama in order to point out this two-fold crime. It appears but once and utters a few, pregnant words; but we continually feel that it is hovering in the background, like a dark thundercloud; it is, so to say, the offended spirit of history itself, which, in fact, not only avenges political crimes, but visits ethical transgressions with equal severity. This spirit, as it were, perpetually holds up before our view the moral wrong in the murder of Cæsar, as well as the political right which he had on his side owing to the necessity of the monarchy, and points to the fact, that even the triumph of the oligarchical principle is but transitory, oligarchy itself but a transition stage. A similar intention induced Shakspeare to introduce the spectral

apparitions in his 'Richard III.,' for both of these dramas occupy the same historical stage, both represent turning points in history, the end of an old and the beginning of a new state of things; they also exhibit a certain affinity from an ethical point of view.

CHAPTER IV.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

'ANTONY and Cleopatra' must obviously be regarded as a continuation of 'Julius Cæsar;' in the former we have the old times at war with the new, in the latter, these elements are exhibited in their separation, and become themselves engaged in conflict with one another. The oligarchy is restored, the Roman world is divided, and Antony, Octavius and Lepidus govern the empire. Now, *one* person as ruler is an harmonious idea, at least the *tout ensemble* of the state *can* be represented thus in an individual form, can form the central point where all the radii of the wide circle meet; but *several* individuals at the head of the state is an ever insolvable contradiction. An oligarchy, therefore, can only represent a point of transition, it collapses as soon as it has accomplished its purpose. The history of this decay, in the form of given concrete relations and facts, constitutes the historical substance of the drama; the necessity of the transition from the oligarchy to monarchy is its historical truth.

The bursting of the oligarchical form in order to bring to light the monarchy contained in it, can be accomplished only in a struggle of the oligarchists among themselves for supreme power. The question is, Who shall be the victor? Who is capable of patching up the distracted body politic? Who has the power to rule half-slaves who still remember their freedom, and half-freemen with their tendency to be slaves? Antony, Lepidus and Octavius are the rivals for the brilliant misery of this kind of supremacy. Antony in his straightforward, frank disposition, which originally aimed at political and moral greatness, with his love of truth and bravery, and his esteem for personal virtue, of which he gives a proof in his funeral oration on Brutus—represents the old and better days, however, no longer in their purity,

but troubled and corrupted by the spirit of the new order of things. In him are combined the virtues of the former, but also the principal vices of the latter, *i.e.* love of dominion, ambition, inconstancy, arrogance, and excessive voluptuousness. In his relation to Cleopatra, his whole character is a true reflex of the Roman national spirit of the age. In this relation he himself appears like the slave possessed of his never-forgotten remembrance of freedom, and like the freeman with the irresistible tendency to slavery. He tears himself away from the ties that bind him to Cleopatra, only again to fall back into her snares. We see in him sparks of the old heroism and nobleness of soul, flashes of the old energy and geniality that remind us of Cæsar, but they are mere sparks from a smouldering heap of ashes; the fire itself is extinguished, stifled by the atmosphere of excessive love of pleasure. Antony's was never a firm character; Cleopatra makes him a moral renegade, makes him wholly wanting in firmness and character, by the same means—only, as it were, idealised—with which voluptuous Asia had enervated and degraded the character of the Roman people.

By the side of Antony stand Lepidus and Sextus Pompeius, the former a good but weak man, wanting in spirit and energy, the latter a hasty, energetic youth, but wanting in thoughtfulness and experience. They perish; and their glory pales before the star of Octavius' good fortune. He, when compared with them, does not appear to possess any higher moral right, any greater power of mind and energy, or any pre-eminent talent, not even bravery or military skill, and to be supported solely by his prudence and moderation. Yet he is the conqueror of all! And why? Because the history of his day, pre-eminently called for prudence and consistency. When the true, moral spirit of a nation is dead, it has to be replaced by these semi-virtues, that is to say if state and nation are, for a time, to be preserved from utter ruin. There was as yet no motive for the complete downfall of Rome—the time for this had not yet come. History did not as yet desire the overthrow of the Roman empire, and therefore made Octavius its ruler. But even under other circumstances the first demands of history—which is

itself essentially action—are moderation, prudence and self-control. He who does not possess these qualities—he who, like Antony, cannot control himself, or, like Lepidus, sceptre in hand, sleeps off his drunken debauches, dreaming of the crocodiles of Egypt, or, like young Pompeius, fancies himself able to spring to the head of the empire at one bound—is not destined to take an independent part in the great piece of machinery; it thrusts him off into perdition. This is the universally acknowledged and yet often neglected lesson which runs through the history of all nations, and is here the fundamental chord of the whole; history conceived from the standpoint of its autocratic power of action and evolution, proclaims its own independence by demanding of its bearers energy and perseverance, and accordingly, above all things, moderation, steadfastness of purpose and self-control.

This theme is re-echoed in the deaths of Enobarbus and Fulvia; both, as regards their character and life, stand in the same relation to Octavia, Macænas and Agrippa, as Antony to Octavius. But Cleopatra—‘the serpent of old Nile,’ the representative of the fallen greatness, of the degenerate, corrupt culture of the East, which has been stifled in sensual pleasures and voluptuousness—is adorned to excess with beauty and grace, mind and wit, is full of caprices and contradictions, and possessed of passions as glowing as they are sudden in their change; as wanton and voluptuous as old Asia, as fantastic, strange and unfathomable as mysterious Egypt itself; the very essence of oriental splendour and naturalness, but, at the same time, initiated in all the arts of an over-refined civilisation; a woman with all the vices and virtues of a woman, half Grace, half Mæade, full of coquetry, fickleness and egotism, and yet equally full of love and devotion, wholly absorbed in feminine frivolity, and yet at the same time of a lofty mind and a genial instinct for true greatness. She, in whom everything is becoming, because she does it with the charm of demoniacal gracefulness, can, it is true, deceive an Antony and rule half the world through him, but cannot herself govern, cannot act independently. She lives to repent the arrogance and capricious inquisitiveness which

drove her from her state-apartments, from her couch, into the council chambers of men, and into war and battles; but, like Antony, she perishes owing to her want of inward firmness of character. For, notwithstanding her cunning and artifice, she is as far removed from prudence as she is from moderation and self-control; all her machinations are of no avail upon the cold-blooded, self-possessed Octavius. Accordingly she falls with Antony, whose death is her own work. In her downfall she once more collects all the broken rays of the fulness of her energy and of her lofty mind; in death and suicide the East has ever proved itself great. Octavius loses the principal figure for his triumphal entry; but the victory is doubly his. He has conquered, not only the already broken, heroic greatness, the military skill and the mental superiority of an Antony, but also the amorous arts of a Cleopatra, and this last conquest must be acknowledged greater than the first. The tribunal of history, therefore, looks upon him as in the right, because he has the greater amount of inward, moral right on his side. He is, indeed, ambitious and greedy of power, but his adversaries are no less so. The moderation, however, which he alone possesses is the chief of political virtues, for, if it be true to itself, it involves self-control.

And yet, how poor Octavius appears in this, his mean virtue, which, after all, he employs only to secure his seeming greatness, his artificial supremacy over a demoralized people whose life cannot be preserved except by artificial means; this virtue, accordingly, becomes a mere mask to his love of dominion. We read his whole future—his whole, long, undignified life—from his character as it is described by Shakspeare; we see all the dissembler's arts, the tacks and doubles which he will have to make, to steer the ship of the state—freighted as it is with the ballast of his own greatness—through the billows of the time. Genuine poetry, like history, shows us the future in the present; it shows us the outward success that goes hand-in-hand with historical justice, but also the rotten worm-eaten kernel of this success when it is merely external, when devoid of ethical substance, of ethical foundation. The real victory, therefore, does not rest

either with Antony or with Octavius; when judged by a higher standard both are in the wrong. But the demoralised spirit of the Roman people could no longer endure justice or truth. The great Cæsar had to fall in order to make way for the little Augustus; this is the tragic end of Roman history, and contains the terrible truth which is proclaimed in every line of the piece. Accordingly, in the present case again, the fundamental idea of the single drama rises up to the general historical view of the whole.

‘Julius Cæsar,’ to judge from the language and the delineation of character, was probably written but a few years earlier than ‘Antony and Cleopatra.’ Collier,* it is true, points out a passage in Drayton’s epic poem ‘The Barons’ Wars,’ 1603, which has much resemblance with a judgment expressed by Antony upon the character of Brutus (v. 5), and infers from this that ‘Julius Cæsar’ had appeared before 1603. Yet Shakspeare might have borrowed the expression referred to from Drayton, or, what is more likely, accidentally clothed a similar thought in a similar form; at least Collier has not proved the contrary, nay, not even made it seem probable. In any case, this circumstance does not appear to me a sufficient reason for separating ‘Julius Cæsar’ from ‘Coriolanus’ and ‘Antony and Cleopatra,’ by a series of intervening years.

‘Antony and Cleopatra’ is entered at Stationers’ Hall under the date of the 20th of May, 1608, with the name of the publisher of the folio edition, and is, therefore, probably Shakspeare’s work although his name is not mentioned, and although no earlier print than the folio of 1623 is known. It may, accordingly, have been written in 1607; and it may further be assumed that, after having written ‘Julius Cæsar,’ the poet was led to dramatise the succeeding portion of Roman history, and again, that he may have been led to write his ‘Julius Cæsar’ by other pieces (on Henslowe’s stage), more particularly by a play of Lord Sterling’s on the same subject, which was printed

* His edition of *Shakspeare’s Works*, vii. 3.

in 1604. Lastly, language and versification also point to a somewhat earlier origin than in the case of 'Antony and Cleopatra,' therefore 'Julius Cæsar' must have appeared upon the stage somewhere about 1605-6; this is the opinion also of Malone, Chalmers, Drake and Tieck. In 'Julius Cæsar,' as in 'Antony and Cleopatra' Shakspeare, moreover, has followed his authority—North's translation of Plutarch—as closely as in the case of 'Coriolanus,' except that somewhat more light is thrown upon the character of Antony than is met with in history. In this respect also all three pieces are essentially of the same stamp.

Th. Vatke,* in an excellent treatise has mentioned the several points in which Shakspeare has deviated from Plutarch's account. These are invariably but chronological alterations of unimportant incidents and (especially in acts iv. and v.) of different motives for the conduct of both heroes, by means of which not only Antony, but Cleopatra also appears in a somewhat better light than according to Plutarch's conception. I, however, cannot agree with Vatke when he infers from these deviations and from the corresponding treatment of the historical matter in general, that the tragedy cannot be considered as an historical drama, in the narrower sense of the word, on account of the preponderance, throughout the play, of what is 'purely personal and æsthetic compared with the historical,' and on account of the interest in the historical events being quite subordinate to the interest in what is purely personal. A glance at the first scene of the third act—in which Ventidius (Antony's legate) enters 'as in triumph,' because of his victory over the Parthians, and which is so characteristic of the condition of Rome at the time, and of the relation of the first men of the empire (more especially that of the victorious generals) to the triumvirs—would, I think, suffice to refute this opinion. For an incident which is important *only* in an historical respect, is here so purposely interwoven with the course of the action, and made so prominent, that the poet's intention

* *Shakspeare's Antonius und Kleopatra, and Plutarch's Biographie des Antonius*, in the *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Shaksp. Gesellschaft*, iii.

1 ff.

of everywhere doing justice to the historical matter, is clearly evident. Had Shakspeare wished merely to describe the life and story of the loves of Antony and Cleopatra upon an historical background, he would assuredly not only have *not* introduced the Parthians, but also have left Sextus Pompeius and his pirates, etc., out of the question, or, at most have mentioned them and their relations to Antony in a secondary scene, whereas in the drama they are personally introduced to us, and their deeds and fortunes form a part of the dramatic action. It is true that some historically important events are treated in a brief and sketchy manner, and that, accordingly, more scope is given to the personal relations of the principal characters, but these historical incidents offered but little or no poetical material, and hence could not be admitted into a drama.

Shakspeare, however, has acted in the same way in *all* of his historical pieces, because, as a poet, he *could* not do otherwise, inasmuch as pure facts, and the impersonal elements of history are at the same time unpoetical. The dramatist can take them into consideration only in so far as they are represented in persons, or can be placed in some personal relation to the chief characters of the piece. And in so far Shakspeare has taken them into consideration in his 'Antony and Cleopatra;' whether, however, he has done this exactly to the same extent here as in his other historical dramas is, in my opinion, a question which it would be very difficult to answer, and scarcely worth the trouble of deciding.

In 'Antony and Cleopatra' the historical matter offered much greater difficulties for dramatic treatment than, in the case of 'Julius Cæsar' and 'Coriolanus.' The life of Antony, which is so closely connected with the life and fate of Cleopatra, is interwoven with such a variety of circumstances, events and persons, that this amount of subject-matter was difficult to manage without robbing the action represented of its clearness and simplicity; and therefore in spite of the compressed and hence often obscure brevity of the expression employed by Shakspeare, and which is the chief difference of its diction compared with that of 'Julius Cæsar,' the representation is so broad

in detail, that we are scarcely able to grasp the whole. Even Schlegel* complained that the preparatory and concurring circumstances are not sufficiently collected in masses, to avoid distracting our attention; and Gervinus observes that the piece is full of discordant interruptions, perpetually changing between what is external, historical and private, and between restlessness and calm; that the voluptuous love of Antony and Cleopatra invariably interrupts the peace of political life, and this again the calmness of enjoyment; and further that this contrast is not properly exhibited owing to the brevity and ruggedness of the scenes. However, even in regard to this point, I think that the laws which regulate the composition of an historical drama are not the same as those which apply to a freely invented dramatic work; the historical drama must, in this respect also, be allowed greater freedom, if it is not to lose in truth, in depth and in significance, what it gains in simplicity, in clearness and in beauty of dramatic form. Now this very fulness and complicated variety of circumstances of events and characters, this sharp contrast between political, public and private life, between old Roman energy and effeminate voluptuousness, essentially belonged to the character of the age which the drama represents; only such a position of affairs would explain the fall of Antony and the victory of Octavius, the downfall of the oligarchy and the foundation of the monarchy. Shakspeare could here have hardly acted otherwise if his work was to preserve an historical character, and not to renounce the dignity and significance of an historical drama.

* *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, translated by Dr. John Black.

CHAPTER V.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS TO THE ENGLISH HISTORIES.
KING JOHN.

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS TO THE ENGLISH HISTORIES.

IN turning to the second great cycle, consisting of the English histories, we shall find that the poet has, in them, proceeded on an apparently different course, that he has treated the historical matter with greater freedom, and paid more regard to his public, and to the dramatic effects of his works. Gervinus disputes Schlegel's assertion that in Shakspeare's histories the leading features of events are so faithfully conceived, their causes and even their secret motives so clearly penetrated 'that the truth of history may be learned from them.' And H. Courtenay,* also, has taken the trouble, in a work of two volumes, to point out how far every single incident, every turn in the course of the action in Shakspeare, coincides with its historical source, and finally pretty well denies that they possess any historical value. But Gervinus†—whose judgment in historical matters is assuredly more to be depended upon than Mr. Courtenay's—expressly acknowledges that Shakspeare often brings together a series of facts which display a unity of action; that he comprehends various actions under one cause and traces them to one and the same origin, so as to be able to make use of the wealth of history without destroying the unity of the action; that he rejects other facts which could not be brought into this unity; in short, that he indeed pays little heed either to the laws of chronology or, in fact, to anything that might be termed external truth, but that he invariably respects 'the law of internal truth,' that 'higher and universal

* *Commentaries on the Historical Plays of Shakspeare.*† *Shakspeare Commentaries*, p. 252 f.

truth,' which is gathered by the poet, not as would be done by an historian by entering into every detail of the historical subject, but from a series of facts; and from the very circumstance of this internal truth proceeding from historical and actual facts, and being supported and upheld by them, it must be admitted that it acquires a double authority, *i.e.* the authority of poetry and of history combined.' When, accordingly, Gervinus thus acknowledges the 'internal truth' of Shakspeare's dramas, he, in reality, maintains exactly what Schlegel meant to imply, but expressed in a form less precise and liable to be misunderstood. For, 'to learn the truth of history' does not mean to learn external historical facts by heart, but to understand their significance and meaning, that is, to gain a knowledge of their 'internal truth.'

This 'internal truth,' however, lies more deeply concealed in modern than in ancient history; in the former, the relations and conditions from which events proceed, are not so natural and simple, the leading ideas and persons, the characters of the nations and their representatives do not stand out so distinctly, or in so plastic and round a manner, as in antiquity; even an age like that of Antony and Cleopatra seems clear and simple when compared with the times of King John, Henry IV. and his successors. Hence the poet could not give a poetical reflex of the historical substance with the same fidelity and truth; in the latter case, the more important and the more complicated the mass of events, the number and characters of the dramatic personages, and the co-operating relations and conditions, the more frequently he was obliged to 'combine' facts, to 'comprise' various actions under one kind of cause, or to refer them to one and the same origin, and the less could he avoid occasionally offending the law of chronology, and all that which may be termed external truth. To this must be added the fact that a portion of the English histories were written by Shakspeare in his younger days, and that all (with the exception of 'Henry VIII.') belong to the first two stages of the poet's career, a period in which his mind had not yet attained its full maturity, or its full power in carrying out

his artistic intentions. It is all the more astonishing that he has, nevertheless, in all cases succeeded in hitting the internal truth, and in exhibiting it in its own peculiar features through the historical facts.

The most frequent and most striking deviations from history are therefore to be found in the three parts of 'Henry VI.,' in 'Richard III.,' and in 'King John.' In regard to the latter piece—which I place at the head of my discussions, because, in Schlegel's words, it forms the prologue to the other English histories—this is in the first place explained by the fact that Shakspeare had to follow an older and, as it seems, an exceedingly popular drama of the same name and subject, and which, to some extent deserved the great applause it received. But in addition to this, the historical subject itself, as we shall see, demanded, comparatively speaking, more abbreviations, condensations and violations of chronology, etc., than elsewhere. And yet even in 'King John' all the principal facts and characters are portrayed with historical fidelity; the deviations from history are only that Arthur (at least according to the Chronicle of Math. Paris) at the time of his imprisonment was not so young, so innocent, or so sensitive a child, as to have taken no part in politics; that the interval between his death and that of John was far greater (almost fourteen years); that the archduke of Austria, who kept Richard Cœur de Lion a prisoner for some time, is dragged into the history of King John, and confounded with the Duke of Limoges in front of whose castle it was that Richard fell; that Faulconbridge, the bastard, is not the historical character which he here appears, but is merely believed, by popular tradition, to be a natural son of Richard Cœur de Lion, Philip by name (who, according to Holinshed, is said to have, in 1199, murdered the Duke of Limoges to avenge his father's death); and lastly that it was not John's bad government and despotic violation of the rights of the nobility and of the people, but Arthur's death—of which he is accused—that is represented as the principal motive of the revolt of the barons; for which reason there is no mention of the granting of the Magna Charta. The omission of so important a historical fact is the chief

thing censured in the poet by modern historians and critics, and is regarded as a want of historial appreciation. Courtenay thinks that 'as Shakspeare was a decided courtier, he might not wish to remind Queen Elizabeth—who set Magna Charta at nought in its most interesting particular—of the solemn undertakings of her ancestors.' But Kressig justly reminds us that even the historians of the sixteenth century entered but very superficially and cursorily into the history of that famous privilege, and that the whole constitutional question did not receive its actual significance till the struggles between the Stuarts and the House of Commons. Shakspeare's public probably knew little or nothing about the Magna Charta, and still less about its historical importance. This importance it, in fact, did not possess directly at the time of its origin, but acquired it only at a subsequent period; the Barons and burgesses of the day regarded it, and had demanded it, only as a means of protecting themselves against John's arbitrary rule, and of strengthening the promise he had given of a better government. The poet upon whom it devolved to give a representation of the internal truth of the reign of King John, and thereby a reflex of the spirit and character of the Middle Ages in general—not indeed merely its political motives and principles, but its ethical motives and principles as well—could, accordingly, not admit into his play an external and at the same time an unimportant fact which referred only to John's personal conduct, without burdening it with superfluous ballast and detracting from the historico-poetical interest of his work. It was for similar reasons and with equal justice, that he made the other deviations in the historical data, or rather retained them from the older play of 'Kynge Johan.' For the historical dramatist is the court-poet, not the court-servant of history; he can frequently be true to history only by being untrue in other things. And this infidelity is justified by history itself, according to which every great event, like every great man, is surrounded by a number of satellites, attendants and servants, the selection of whom appears more or less accidental, and who, accordingly might have been different without this doing injury to the significance contained in

the principal incidents of the historical development. All that which serves clearly to exhibit this importance of the facts the poet must take into consideration, even though it were apparently ever so trivial and insignificant; everything else can be left to the free disposal of his artistic genius. The greater the poet, the less he will have to alter, and the more will his free creation be an *historical* poem. Only in this manner *can* history and historical truth, in the limitation imposed upon the poet by the artistic form, be a work of art. This is the reason why history cannot be *learned* even from Shakspeare's dramas—there are schoolmasters and historical books enough in the world for this—and therefore Courtenay's inquiry, as to whether Shakspeare's histories are adapted for *teaching* history, that is, for taking the place of a schoolmaster, is very superfluous. Yet even this pedantic inquiry only tends to immortalise the poet; we find from it, as Gervinus intimates, that Shakspeare's deviations from his historical sources are, in fact, almost exclusively single anachronisms, omissions and condensations, here and there a different light thrown upon the picture, or secondary personages added to enrich it. This is done not only in 'King John,' but also in 'Henry IV.'

2. KING JOHN.

After these introductory remarks, which apply to all Shakspeare's English histories, I begin my discussion with 'King John,' because, in more than one respect, the piece is not only the prologue, but the basis of the whole cycle. As in 'Coriolanus' the nature of the ancient state is depicted in the relation most important to its foundation, the family bond, so, in the present case, we first of all obtain an insight into the essentially different conception of the mediæval state. The ancient state, inasmuch as it had proceeded from the natural bond of family life, was itself but the extended, legally established and organised family bond, and would have fulfilled its idea, if that which the family represented in a limited sphere, and in a loose, undeveloped and personal form,

had, in its extended shape, assumed a general, legally-established and organised form. And in this case there would never have existed any conflicts between the rights of the family and those of the state. In other words, the *natural* order of human life—which in the family bond was given in a direct personal manner, and thus existed still as a mere germ—ought, when the family extended into a tribe and nation, to have been reflected in the state with conscious clearness and definiteness, and to have developed into a just and legally fixed organism. This was the idea of the ancient state and the aim of its development, which accordingly tended towards the republican form, and approached its aim most closely during the short, palmy days of the Roman republic.

The mediæval state was very different. It developed partly out of the deeply-rooted tendency of the Germanic mind towards *unlimited personal* freedom, partly upon the basis of ethical ideas and of the general view of life entertained by *Christianity* as conceived by the spirit of the age. The interaction, the alternate struggle and peace between these two principles constituted the mediæval state: the first principle gave the form, *i.e.* the *feudal* system of the state; the second, the ideal, ethical substance, *i.e.* the idea of the state as the earthly reflex of the Kingdom of God, which was represented by the church—a reflex naturally supported and conditioned by its prototype. Just as the mind, in alternate harmony and discord, possesses the body as its organ, so the church, in a similar degree of correlation, ought to be the higher and guiding spirit of the state. Its foundation, accordingly, was no longer the natural existence of man with his natural institutions; what was *naturally*-human was rather to be done away with, and to be replaced by the *divinely*-human, and the natural order of things, therefore, to be replaced by the divine order, that is, by the hierarchy and its head, the representative of Christ. This, at least, was the aim of the Pope and the clergy, and they managed throughout the Middle Ages to obtain universal acceptance for their view. It may, therefore, be said: the family bond was represented, during the Middle Ages, by two essentially ethical communities, as

the foundation of its structure and the principle of its development; first by the *feudal* community which was founded upon free devotion and personal fidelity, secondly, by the *religious* community, the church. The latter was the universal, the necessary and indissoluble union of all men into a many-membered whole directed by the Holy Spirit, that is, a whole governed by Pope and clergy; the feudal community, on the other hand, was the special union of individuals with an individual, which had ever to be renewed, and, accordingly, was dissoluble. In the latter community, the greatest possible scope was granted to personal freedom, and the feudal chief, as well as the vassal, was valued only in so far as he could maintain his authority by his own power and personal energy. This bond was as loose and weak as the former was firm and strong; and as both principles stood opposed to one another in inward contradiction—inasmuch as the desire for personal freedom which scorned all restraints, necessarily came into conflict with the hierarchical endeavour to obtain absolute power—they could not but come into hostile collision, wherever they came into contact at all. In this conflict the church was necessarily victorious as long as this idea of the state and of the feudal system continued to exist. For, according to this idea, the state when coming into conflict with the church, was, at the same time, at strife with itself, and, therefore, it was quite natural that, in such a contest, the feudal community was always in a state of dissolution, because the church—as the ruler of consciences—could deprive it of its foundation, the binding power of the oath, and hence of its obligation to fulfil its promise of fidelity. On the other hand, the feudal system, of itself, was a perpetual temptation to every great vassal to play the part of the chief himself, and, in the same way, as he had helped the king to the throne and was a prop of the throne, would endeavour to overthrow it when it suited his purpose. The feudal system itself, therefore, was in a continual state of change, between decay and reconstruction, and hence, ever the ready tool for the arrogances of the church.

This nature, this condition, of the mediæval state

forms, so to say, the general ground on which move the ten great dramas headed by 'King John.' For, as in 'Coriolanus,' we have the antique state in conflict with its foundation, the family bond and its rights, so in 'King John,' the centre of the action lies in the struggle between the mediæval state and its one basis, the church. As the latter was or pretended to be the ideal side of political life, and thus, as it were, the ethos, that is, the conscience of the state, this struggle is first of all reflected in John's own life and character; we have it exhibited in the perpetual conflict between his better self, which was naturally disposed to manly dignity, independence, and quick and resolute action, and his tendency to arbitrary proceedings, love of dominion and pretension, to caprice and passionate recklessness. Being in conflict with himself, his naturally discordant disposition degenerates into complete inconsistency and want of character. Hence, although he has even resorted to murder, he cannot maintain his tottering throne, either against Arthur's legitimate claims, or against the interferences of France and of the church. His own unjust title to the crown, his violence, and his inconsistent and arbitrary actions, his dispute with the church, and the intrigues of the latter, become the motives of France's breach of faith, of the ever-recurring contests from without, as well as of the internal dissensions of the kingdom. The relation between Church and State is the pulse of the whole historical action; John's dilemmas, his degradation and his death are its work, and the only means that it employs are that it contrives cleverly to make use of the illegitimacy attached to his crown, the weakness of his own character, and the want of strength in the feudal community, which again was the result of John's despotic rule.

However, this state of decay is manifested not only externally, in John's kingdom and his relation to the barons and people, but also internally, and again not only in the State, for the Church itself is rotten to its inmost core; the policy of both is immoral, selfish and pretentious, and therefore loosened from its true foundation. The church, too, is desirous only of outward splendour, authority and

power; it has entirely mistaken its own nature and its true vocation, and has fallen as low as the secular power, owing to its disloyal, intriguing actions, and its sophistic perversion of the fundamental laws of all morality. Cardinal Pandulph is the truest picture ever painted by poet of an arrogant hierarchy, wholly absorbed in love of dominion and selfishness. This is why, in the end, neither the church nor the royal power conquer in the struggle; it is rather the people and the barons that reap the advantage; they are, comparatively speaking, soundest both morally and politically. Their representative is Faulconbridge, the natural son of Richard Cœur de Lion. Of all the characters in the play, he is the most independent, the most vigorous; a man bound by no prejudice, or by any consideration of the past. This advantage he owes to his very birth which connects him with the reigning dynasty, but also with the people. His motives are of the purest, or, at least, gradually become motives of pure, devoted patriotism and knightly honour; hence he alone can, with impunity, speak the truth to all, and he says it with that overflowing wealth of humour, which, according to Shakspeare's psychology, is generally at the command of minds in a truly vigorous and healthy state. This humour—which does not proceed from subtle reflection, but which springs forth from the genuine, energetic and straightforward naturalness of his disposition, as from a clear mountain spring, whose source lies high above the abodes of corrupt civilization—he applies, with bold and pertinent epithets, to ridicule the selfishness, the cowardliness and pretentiousness, the fickleness and untruthfulness of the leading characters of the action, as well as the low selfishness of the policy both of Church and State; in the mirror of his cutting irony, he shows us the rotten condition of both. As he alone bears within his breast the enduring, restoring and saving power of morality, so it is mainly through him that England is saved from the misery of civil strife, from the claws of France and of the papacy. Accordingly, the power of the mightiest potentates is surpassed by the externally-subordinate power of knighthood and citizenship, because the latter are supported by moral energy and manliness. This is

the lesson history is ever repeating, and, at the same time, is the meaning of the Magna Charta.

The result of the disturbances and struggles is the freedom of the English people; it is established inwardly by the overthrow of John's despotic government, outwardly by the victory over France and over the pretensions of the church. John dies, but his death is the beginning of the restoration of the state; not only do the English barons return to their obedience, whereby France, at the same time, is defeated, but the poison which the hands of a priest had mixed for the king, also proves the ruin of the advantage gained by the church, for the feudal supremacy of Rome over England, which had been acknowledged by John, is buried with him. The rivalry of the Church against the State, and its endeavour to obtain external power and dominion proves its own ruin.

Hence the theme of the drama, the representation of modern history in its peculiar and essential relation to Church and State, is worked out in many variations, and the play, shows that this relation is in truth not external, no imaginary ideal as conceived by the Middle Ages, but an internal, real-ethical relation, and that the organism of the state necessarily becomes unsound and decays, wherever it has lost its ethical power, and consequently its equilibrium. It shows that history is not dependent either upon royalty or upon the papacy, or upon this or that form of Church or State, or, in fact, upon Church or State at all; that both are rather but forms of the moral ethico-religious spirit, and that, therefore, neither Church nor State can accomplish anything *without*, much less *against*, the moral force, let the latter appear externally ever so powerless. It may, accordingly, be said that the leading thought of the play is intimated in the closing words, when Faulconbridge says:

This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world in arms.
And we shall shock them: Nought shall make us rue,
If England to/itself do rest but true.

For the State cannot be true to itself unless it is animated by an ecclesiastical spirit, the Church by a political spirit, that is, unless both are inspired by the spirit of true morality.

The fortunes, the doings and the sufferings of all the secondary figures are, of course, determined and conditioned by the course of the main action, as the latter is determined by the leading thought of the whole; accordingly, it will also be reflected in all the secondary parts. The plans of the King of France, of the Dauphin, and of the Archduke of Austria are frustrated by their own selfish, arrogant, and faithless policy, which is equally opposed to the nature of the state; consequently it also proves the ruin of Blanche's hopes. The conduct of the English barons is explained from their feudal position to the royal power and from John's usurped sovereignty, the unjustness of which is manifest from its very weakness, uncertainty, and violence. Where the inmost nature of the body is unsound, the separate members cannot be perfectly healthy. The fortunes of Constance and Arthur are a kind of episode in John's own life, but yet appear significantly interwoven with the history of the state. Their story may be said to form a pendant to the fundamental moral of the play: that nothing is more disavowed by history than passionateness and want of self-control, the hereditary failings of woman's nature. Women ought not to interfere with history, as history demands action, for which they are usually unfit. The pathos of maternal love which rules the soul of Constance is indeed a motive as noble as it is just, considering the circumstances. But, on the one hand, this love is not quite pure and disinterested, it is manifestly mixed with a goodly amount of ambition and love of dominion; on the other hand, owing to Constance's impetuous nature, it becomes immoderate passion, which blindly and heedlessly follows its own object, and in trying in vain to force the iron course of history from its path, rises to a height where it turns into suicidal rage. In fact, Constance and her son are ruined by the very vehemence of the passion with which she endeavours to obtain his rights, although Arthur, not being of age, could not have

ascended the throne. The boy, because dependent, as the child of his mother, had therefore to forfeit his life, although he was himself innocent, and had already once been saved from John's murderous designs by the compassion of Hubert. Had Constance possessed more prudence, and waited till he himself, of his own manly strength, could have asserted his right—and then only could he have been fully entitled to his right—that which belonged to them would have fallen into their hands of its own accord.

Moreover, the historical subject-matter offered by the reign of King John—the perpetually conflicting interests, the disorganised state of the body politic, the many fluctuations of fortune, and the vacillation of a selfish policy, the alternate advance and retrogression of the course of history before it arrived at its proper result—in short, the great variety of events and characters imperatively demanded that this multiplicity should be reduced and concentrated in definite and prominent individuals. Shakspeare, therefore, require *representatives*: above all a person in whom to exhibit John's injustice, his violence, and recklessly despotic government, a person in John's treatment of whom, these fundamental features of his character (which were pre-eminently the cause of his own ruin) could be set forth in the sharpest and most distinct form; in other words a character such as Arthur, who, notwithstanding his childish innocence, gracefulness and amiability, John pursues to the very death, merely because he stands in the way of his love of dominion, and whose fate, therefore, gives us a clear and pregnant illustration of the ethical element here interwoven with state policy. But Shakspeare also required a representative of the generally heroic and chivalrous spirit of the age, such as Faulconbridge, a contrast to whom we have in the hollow, boastful Archduke of Austria; both, at the same time, are the representatives of the history of the immediate past under Richard Cœur de Lion; the poet further required, a representative of the papacy, such as Cardinal Pandulph; representatives of the English aristocracy, such as the earls of Pembroke and Salisbury; a representative of the loyalty that still prevailed among the people, of the ready obedience to the royal power,

which, however, as a sign of its healthy mind, recoils with horror from an unequivocal crime, such as we have in Hubert de Burgh; he even required a representative of mediæval superstition (a caricature of the powerful ecclesiastical faith), such as the prophet Peter of Pomfret. History does not everywhere, and at every period, offer such representative men; where they do not exist, the poet has to create them, not, however, according to his own fancy, he has, as it were, to form them out of given historical features. Only as such, as likenesses of the spirit of the age, can they claim historical authority, and it is only the greatest masters in historico-dramatic composition that will succeed in drawing such likenesses.

As regards the question as to when 'King John' first appeared on the stage, our only external evidence is the fact that the play is mentioned by Meres. If, as Tieck thinks, Meres did not refer to the older play of 'Kynge Johan,' which appeared in print in 1591, because, as I think, the piece was not written by Shakspeare, then all that is certain is that Shakspeare's play must have appeared before 1597. Most critics do not place it earlier than 1596-97. I, for my part, believe that it may have appeared some years earlier. It is true that it contains but few passages in rhyme (as the subject offered no occasion either for lyrical effusions or for the expression of calm contemplative reflection), but these rhymes are often just those very alternate rhymes which are always less frequently met with in Shakspeare's later works. The drama is also written wholly in verse, to the exclusion of all prose; but this circumstance, to which Gervinus draws attention, I do not consider of any great importance, for in Shakspeare's tragedies and historical dramas (except in the comic scenes introduced) it is invariably only persons from the lower ranks who speak in prose, and such persons and such scenes do not occur in 'King John.' Of greater weight, in my opinion, is the generally clear and regular flow of the language, which is still free from complicated similes and constructions, and also the regular, almost monotonous versification with its usually masculine endings—a circumstance pointed out

by K. Elze. I am therefore inclined to assume that 'King John' may have appeared in 1593-94, that is, in the interval after the completion of the earlier tetralogy of English histories, which comprises the three parts of 'Henry VI.' and 'Richard III.,' but before the commencement of the later one, which includes 'Richard II.,' 'Henry IV.' (1st and 2nd Parts), and 'Henry V.'

CHAPTER VI.

RICHARD II.

THE character of Richard II. is in many respects the counterpart of King John, for while he tries in vain to maintain his usurped sovereignty by bad means, Richard forfeits his good right to the royal power by making bad use of it. History, inasmuch as it is life, will tolerate no abstract or dead ideas. The fixed formula of an external, legal *right* established by man, it regards as nothing but a formula; it values a right which is truly just only in so far as it is founded upon *morality*. This right Richard has forfeited, because he has himself trampled upon it. Even the highest earthly power is not independent of the external laws of history; and even the right of majesty *by the grace of God* loses its title as soon as it breaks away from its foundation, the grace of God, whose justice acknowledges no legal claims, no hereditary or family right in contradiction to the sole right of truth and reason. Richard boasts in vain of his legal title, in vain of the divine right of majesty, he calls in vain to its angels who set him on the throne; his right and his name do not produce the slightest effect, because they are devoid of the creative power of inward justice. His people forsake him because he first forsook them. The wrong of rebellion prevails; Richard's nature, which in itself is noble, and has merely become degenerate, succumbs to the shrewdness and prudence of a Bolingbroke. Small as is the truly moral spirit exhibited by the man afterwards king Henry IV., he seems a hero of virtue compared with the unworthy, most unkingly Richard; at all events he possesses the necessary and essential attributes of princes, wisdom, self-control and strength of will and energy.

Under so unkingly a sovereign the country could not

but be plunged in misery and dissension. At the very beginning of the play, therefore, we find the nobility engaged in angry feuds, the people in Ireland in open rebellion, and the royal family itself distracted. The Duchess of Gloster complains of her husband's fate; Richard's arbitrary decision of the dispute between Norfolk and Bolingbroke, and the banishment of the latter, throws the old Duke of Gaunt in sorrow upon his death-bed. It is in vain that he attempts to warn the King; truth cannot force its way into ears that are stuffed and deafened with flattery. Caprice is followed by caprice, infamy by infamy. Richard mortgages his kingdom, and rapaciously draws in all the properties belonging to the duchy of Lancaster in order to quell the Irish rebellion. This is the turning-point of his fate. While vaunting of his hereditary right, of his royal prerogative by the grace of God, he himself tramples upon all these very hereditary and family rights, sells his divine inheritance, and thus falls into a ruinous state of contradiction with himself; he, the first rebel, himself sows the seeds of the revolution which robs him of his throne and of his life. And by defying the right of the historical past (which is the true substance of the so-called right of inheritance), he himself takes his stand on a bottomless future. It is only the older men among his subjects—those living in the remembrance of a better past and fancy they still see the noble, heroic father in the son—who remain faithful to him; among these are the good and honest, but weak and indolent, Duke of York with his very different son, and the strict impartial Bishop of Carlisle, who weighs right and wrong in the same scales, and, for this very reason, is an inactive man. All the vigorous youth and manhood, however, waver and hesitate, and ultimately go over to the rebel party; they, in accordance with their nature, look to the present and to the future which, being undermined by Richard's actions, is tottering and threatening to collapse. God's guidance and dispensation of things, which Richard had implicitly trusted, decides against him; had he returned but *one* day earlier from Ireland, he would have found an army ready equipped for battle, but, by an accidental delay,

and deceived by a report of the king's death, it had dispersed, or gone over to Henry Bolingbroke.

Thus deprived of all means of support, and finally breaking down helplessly within himself, Richard delivers himself up into the hands of his enemies. His life, like the rotten trunk of a tree, is broken by the storm which he himself had raised; his creatures, Bushy, Bagot, Green, and the Earl of Wiltshire, who had been the servants of a bad master, and had abetted him in his caprice and injustice, fall, like the branches, before the trunk. The queen, even in the time of prosperity, was oppressed by a 'nameless woe,' and looked towards the future with a foreboding dread, *i.e.* with a conviction that Richard's unholy actions could lead only to misery; yet she has neither the energy nor the will to prevent that which was in her power. She is the partner of her husband's unkingly extravagance, and, at the death-bed of old Gaunt, listens *tacitly* to his fruitless warnings, to Richard's insulting speeches, and to his command to seize the revenues and property of the duchy of Lancaster, therefore, she justly shares her consort's fate. Misfortune, however, raises both above their fate, and shows us the sparks of light which slumbered in Richard's originally noble nature. For he is not merely a weakly, shallow, and dissolute voluptuary, he is intelligent, rich in imagination, of strong but too excitable feelings, and of acute judgment (as is proved by his remarks upon young Bolingbroke, who had been banished); but his lively imagination blinds his judgment, the exuberance of his feelings overpowers his will. Richard is not without power and courage, but his unbridled courage turns into haughtiness and arrogance; he imagines that it would be doing himself and his royal majesty an injustice to sacrifice his own desires to law, to duty or to the welfare of the state. He becomes a reckless spendthrift, less from natural inclination than because he fancies that unlimited munificence, splendour, pomp and parade are requisite for the maintenance of the royal dignity (this is proved by the manner of his extravagance); he is devotedly fond of his wife, his friends and favourites, but his wife is like a weak and pliant reed, incapable of affording him support,

and his friends are common, selfish flatterers, who only encourage him in his weaknesses and take advantage of his favour in the meanest and most selfish manner. Accordingly, it is neither wickedness of heart nor lowness of disposition, but rather youthful lightheadedness and thoughtlessness, an over-abundance of imagination and of sentiment, a haughty nature over-estimating itself and its power and dignity, but, above all, a want of self-control, and hence of strength of will and of power to resist temptation, that occasion Richard's fall. The great, overwhelming downfall brings him to self-consciousness; the lightheaded, arrogant youth who lived wholly for outward circumstances, becomes a meditative ponderer absorbed in his sorrowful thoughts and feelings. But the resignation with which he bears his fate, his contrite repentance of his transgressions, his in general dignified conduct, and the courage which he maintains even in his last moments, atone for his faults, and compel us to feel sincere pity for him. The conclusion of the drama makes a deeply poetical and truly tragic impression.

Obviously, therefore, one thought pervades the whole composition in all its various parts. It is the high, historical significance of royalty that forms the central point of the representation; royalty, as conceived by the spirit of the Middle Ages down to modern times, that is, as a divine vocation, the highest, but also the most difficult position that man can be called upon to fill. In reality every human being has his calling from God; but inasmuch as the office and welfare of all the individual members of the state are more or less dependent upon the royal power of the king, so his dignity stands in a more direct relation to God's overruling grace; it exists pre-eminently by the grace of God. But for that very reason, and because, as Shakspeare shows, the condition of the whole nation is dependent upon the administration of the royal office, the king ought to be the more fully conscious of the divine grace; the greater his crime, therefore, when, forgetting his dignity, he acts in an unkingly manner, without either justice or grace. If he acts contrary to his calling, its divine nature will not protect him. For his right consists merely in his having been called upon to fill the office, and

he acquires the right only in following his calling. The poet, in describing man's relation to his historical calling and his calling from God, *i.e.* to its ethical foundation, and in revealing the nature of royalty in its relation to God, *i.e.* in its ethical relation, gives us a representation of mediæval and modern history from its most essential point of view. He shows that royalty, just *because* it exists by the grace of God, is *not merely* founded upon hereditary right, but rather upon the same basis as the state itself, that is, upon the nation being made an organic whole by law and morality. Consequently, that it ruins itself when it disregards the nation's rights, its wants and its welfare ; in short, that the existence of royalty is incompatible without the esteem and love of the people, and that it contradicts itself when it opposes the spirit and the will of the nation. This is the fundamental idea of the drama, in which the poetical and ethical elements are again most closely blended.

The affecting tragic pathos which pervades the whole, and the tragic form which the historical drama thereby receives, Shakspeare has worked out of his historical subject without applying the slightest force. The nature of the subject was certainly much more favourable for such an undertaking than in 'King John;' only a few unimportant alterations were necessary, and these refer likewise only to secondary circumstances. But these very alterations are again a proof of the poet's correct judgment and of his fine feeling as regards the demands and requirements of his art. With wise self-restraint the poet lets us see only as much of the licentious life and unkingly conduct of Richard as was unavoidably necessary for the explanation of his fall ; for it was not Richard's conduct, nor his mode of life, but his dethronement that was of truly historical importance. The drama, therefore, begins by laying the foundation, that is, by showing the events which were the immediate and principal cause of his fall. The chief of these is the bitter, irreconcilable quarrel between Bolingbroke and Norfolk, and accordingly, in Shakspeare this is made the opening of the drama, which is truly historical in its course, as well as in its motives and causes, and does not (as Gervinus and Kressig think)

deviate from historical tradition. It cannot be maintained (as Gervinus does) that Bolingbroke knew that Norfolk was innocent of Gloster's murder, and accordingly, that he intentionally raised a false accusation against his adversary. Holinshed, at least, reports: 'According to an old French pamphlet, it should appear the king commanded first that this duke Gloster should be conveyed unto the Tower, where he meant to commen with him, not in any other place. But nevertheless, the king shortly after appointed that he should be sent to Calais, as in the same pamphlet is also contained. Others write that immediately upon his apprehension, the earle marshall conveyed him unto the Thames, and there being set aboard . . . was brought to Calis, where he was dispatched out of life, either strangled or smothered with pillows. For the king thinking it not good that the duke of Gloster should stand to his answer openly, because the people bare him so much good will, sent one of his justices called William Kitkill, an Irishman, over unto Calis, there to enquire of the duke of Gloster whether he had committed any such treasons alleged against him. . . . Justice Kitkill, hearing what he confessed upon his examination, wrote the same as he was commanded to do, and therewith speedily returned to the king, and, as it hath been reported, he informed the king (whether truly or not, I have not to say) that the duke frankly confessed everything wherewith he was charged. Whereupon the king sent unto Thomas Mowbraie, earle marshall of Nottingham (afterwards duke of Norfolk), to make the duke secretly awaie. The earle prolonged the time for the executing of the king's commandment, though the king would have had it done with all expedition, whereby the king conceived no small displeasure, and sware it should cost the earle his life if he quickly obeyed not his commandment. The earle thus as it seemed in manner inforced, called out the duke at midnight, as if he should have taken ship to passe over to England, and there in the lodging called the Princes Inn, he caused his servants to cast feather-beds upon him, and so smother him to death, or otherwise to strangle him with towels (as some write).'

In like manner all that Kressig maintains to be an

addition of Shakspeare's own invention, and a striking deviation from history—namely, that Bolingbroke accuses his adversary of appropriating eight thousand nobles, which he had received to pay the king's soldiers at Calais, of being the occasion of all the treason contrived in the realm for eighteen years, and, by his false suggestions and malicious counsels, of having caused the duke of Gloster to be murdered—all this is given in Holinshed's Chronicle, as the substance of Bolingbroke's public accusation against Norfolk. The only thing that can appear strange is that Shakspeare gives such a minute account of the quarrel between the two men, and that he represents it in all its details. He was, however, evidently induced to do this partly on account of the historical importance of the matter, and partly on account of the excellent opportunity it offered for contrasting the two opponents, Richard and Bolingbroke, and of throwing a bright light upon the difference between the two characters.

It is also not true (as Gervinus maintains) that Shakspeare represents the old and venerable Duke of Gaunt of a greater age than he is in history; according to Holinshed, at all events—as in Shakspeare—Gaunt dies shortly before the campaign in Ireland in 1399. On the other hand, history certainly does not report anything of the conversation between the dying Duke of Gaunt and his deluded nephew. But who would miss this scene, who would declare it to be unhistorical merely because nothing is reported of it? Shakspeare wove it into his drama because it explains, in the clearest and most effective manner, Richard's life and character, what he was and what he had become. The same reason induced the poet to increase the age of Richard's wife—who at the time of his execution was scarcely ten years old—so that she can stand by his side as his consort. Again, a similar reason makes him introduce the Duchess of York as her son's advocate, that is, partly in order to place greater stress upon the importance of the scene, and partly in order to make Henry's conduct (after he has ascended the throne), his imperturbable composure, gentleness, and amiability a very contrast to Richard's and the old Duke of York's mode of action. These are the only alterations

that Shakspeare has ventured to make in the historical tradition—with the exception of a few chronological deviations or rather condensations. For his being supposed to have chosen 'the least authenticated' of the various reports regarding the manner in which Richard was put to death—probably on account of its greater poetico-dramatic value—is not true, in so far as Holinshed intimates that he himself considers the account which Shakspeare follows the more worthy of credit, because it is reported by an author who appears to have been well informed.*

The highly finished style of the drama in which historical truth is so wonderfully blended with poetical beauty of language, delineation of character and composition, accounts for its great popularity, not only with the public of recent times, but even with that of Shakspeare's own day; this is proved by the unusually large number of old quartos which exist of the piece. The first of these appeared in 1597, the second as early as the following year 1598, the third in 1608, the fourth in 1615; and as late as 1634 (soon after the publication of the second folio) there appeared a special reprint of the piece with the remark, 'as it hath been lately acted by the kinges servantes at the Globe.' Accordingly it may be assumed that it was brought upon the stage at latest in 1596, probably not much earlier; at all events it was written later than 'Richard. III.' and the three parts of 'Henry VI.,' compared with which it is, in every respect, so far superior that it cannot possibly be placed in the same period with them. But I also consider it a later work than 'King John.' It is true that we meet with many more passages in rhyme here than in 'King John,' however only for this reason, that not only Shakspeare's drama, but the very history of the reign of Richard II. is richer in lyrical elements than that of John; for the same reason the three parts of 'Henry VI.' also—although they assuredly are among the works of Shakspeare's youth—contain fewer passages of this kind. On the other hand we find

* See also A. Schmidt, *Einleitung zu Richard II.*, in the translation of Shakspeare's works by Schlegel and Tieck, published by the German Shakspeare Society.

comparatively but few alternate rhymes in 'Richard II.,' and these are characteristic of his earlier dramas. And yet, in my opinion, the versification is a decided criterion, for compared with its almost uniform regularity in 'King John,' it is freer, more varied, more fluent and harmoniously blended with the subject of the conversations and their turns. The language also—which in 'King John' has still a somewhat dry colour—is fuller, more high sounding, brilliant and richer in thoughts. I think, therefore, that the piece was not written earlier than 1595.

It has been concluded from the introduction of the celebrated parliament-scene (iv. 1), which, as it seems, was a subsequent addition (at least, it is not met with in the two earlier quartos, and is expressly mentioned on the title-page of the third of 1608 as a 'new addition'), that Shakspeare may at a later date have remodelled the whole play. But a comparison of the different quartos proves that—as Clark and Wright* observe—every subsequent edition is but a reprint of its predecessor, and that the text of the fourth quarto is founded upon that of the first folio. What may have induced Shakspeare to introduce this scene, cannot, of course, be determined, scarcely even conjectured, perhaps simply because he found it necessary for the sake of historical truth and the artistic finish of the play, perhaps because he wished to distinguish his 'Richard II.' from the politically different (as it seems anti-royalistic) tendency of another lost drama on the same subject. Of this lost drama we have some account in Dr. Forman's notes of the year 1611, and is probably the same 'Richard II.,' which, in 1601, the Earl of Essex and his insurrectionists had performed, in order to rouse the people against the Queen.

* Cambridge Edition of Shakspeare's Works, vol. iv. p. 8.

CHAPTER VII.

HENRY IV. FIRST AND SECOND PARTS.

'RICHARD II.' is the first part of the great historical drama of five acts which closes with 'Richard III.'; it is self-evident that the wrong-doings of 'Richard II.' and their just punishment, can be no excuse for the wrong of Bolinbroke's rebellion. This is shown directly by the two following dramas which bear the name of 'Henry IV.'; they form the main point in the development of the great cyclic whole, the last link of which is 'Richard III.,' and therefore require to be the more fully and closely examined.

The usurped majesty of Henry IV. reminds us in the first place of John's borrowed majesty; but the relations in the present case are very different. John is opposed by a claimant to the throne, who is protected by the church, by France and by the English barons; the main stress is laid upon the disturbance, the weakness and the abuse of secular as well as of ecclesiastical power, which for this very reason are at conflict with one another and destroy the foundations of human society. Henry IV., on the other hand, has merely to struggle with some of the barons of his own kingdom; the latter are, it is true, supported by some of the bishops, not, however, as representatives of the church, but as dignitaries of the kingdom. Thus in the present case, as in 'Richard II.,' everything moves within the sphere of the state, and therefore the two parts of 'Henry IV.,' when regarded as one whole, are either but the continuation, or again but the contrast to 'Richard II.'

For certain as it is that the unkingly Richard was most justly deprived of his royal power, as certain is it that he could not and ought not to have been robbed of all right to the throne. The external, legal right was unquestionably his. The triumphant rebellion, ought

only to have limited Richard's power in so far as to make its abuse an impossibility or, at most, to have suspended his rule till he had become a wiser and better man, and thus combined within himself the outward and inward title. This was demanded by the true and inviolable law which is administered by history. Richard's actual dethronement, therefore, was an undeniable wrong; this Shakspeare has brought fully into view at the close of the drama. In the depth of his humiliation, and distracted by sorrow and repentance, Richard exhibits a nobility of soul and a greatness of mind far superior to that of Henry IV. In prison Richard builds himself an indestructible throne; in prison and in death he becomes a true king.

Notwithstanding this, he remains dethroned and is murdered at Henry's instigation, and the latter then ascends the throne burdened with the crime; open and secret wrong, breach of faith and violence, falsehood and deception were the means by which he obtained possession of the crown. Accordingly the conflict in question is not yet settled, the point at issue has rather only been reversed. Previously the external right was opposed to the internal right, now the internal right stands opposed to the external right. Henry IV. is inwardly well entitled to the English throne, owing to his cleverness, his thoughtfulness and moderation, his bravery and his energy; but outwardly his crown has not only been acquired by an act of violence, but it is disputed by other and nearer claims which cannot be suppressed by force. Nay, a new conflict is added to the old one. Henry's *inward* title is not *complete* or *adequate*. His mental *abilities* are indeed such as might have entitled him to rule, and he is perhaps the worthiest among the various members of the royal family; but inward justification must above all things possess that which first proves, sustains, and preserves the full title, *i.e.* the *ethical* foundation—*moral* sentiment, *moral* power and steadfastness—which cannot be either turned or bent, but irresistibly obeys the eternal laws of all existence. This element is wanting in Henry IV. He is not morally corrupt, not actually an immoral character; his moral justification would have

sufficed had the outward legal right been on his side. But he has nothing to compensate for the want of the latter, for his morality is wholly devoid of that relation to the ideal substance of the moral law, to the highest, inviolable principles of all resolves and actions, by which alone the morality of the individual receives its value; his morality consists, in fact, but of those subordinate virtues which serve as conditions and means for practical cleverness, for the rational guidance of things and for the gratification of personal interests.

This double conflict into which justice—the living foundation of all political life—has fallen with itself, will not allow the kingdom, under Henry IV., to enjoy peace or to develop its powers freely. The disturbance of justice in the centre of the state is, at the same time, a disturbance to the whole organism. The body-politic itself is internally unsound; but the cure, the solution of the conflict, is, for the moment, an impossibility. For Henry cannot undo what has been done, cannot change the outward wrong into a right; and among his opponents there is none who can equal him in inward justification and ability, none strong enough to dispute the actual possession of the crown. Henry therefore remains king, but, in consequence of the incompleteness of his inward justification, and his entire want of all outward right, he cannot remain in undisturbed possession of the crown; insurrection and rebellion perpetually shake his throne. In constant danger of being overthrown, his reign rocks to and fro like a leaky ship on a stormy sea, between the right of possession and the wrong of usurpation. History, thus, as it were, tacks about in a state of internal restlessness, a continual coming and going, without being able to get into harbour. To describe this state of ferment, this restlessness, as the necessary consequence of the historical relations in their ultimate, ideal causes—both outwardly and inwardly—is the chief task of the historian of Henry IV. For the true historical significance of his reign evidently lies solely in this very unsteadiness, in this movement without a goal, in this striving and struggling without any actual result. It is not till the accession of Henry V. that the history of England again

reaches a point of rest, even though it proves but a temporary one. Henry V. covers the defects of his outward right by the *complete* justification of his mental and moral qualities. He too, certainly, is unable to convert the wrong into a right—it rather remains standing, and, as Shakspeare subsequently shows, works in silence till it has destroyed itself in the fall of the House of Lancaster—but Henry V. succeeds in making it harmless to his own person. The greatness of his mind, the nobility of his sentiments, the brilliancy of his deeds, eclipse the dark stains which after all he had but inherited.

In order to direct our attention to this point of rest, *i. e.* to the nearest end of the restless movement referred to above, the poet found it indispensable not only to introduce into his drama the character of the future Henry V., but to give this character a prominent position. The objection which some critics find in this, cannot hold good in face of the higher necessity of intimating the internal relation between the historical facts and the progress of history dependent upon them, and, at the same time, of connecting the separate parts of the dramatic cycle with one another. It is certainly an anachronism to hear, in 'Richard II.' of the wild doings of the Prince of Wales; the latter was not thirteen years old at the time. It is also true that the person of the Prince is brought so much into the foreground in 'Henry IV.' that the unity, which arises by concentrating the interest in the chief figure, is disturbed; we do not know whether the father or the son is to be considered the hero of the play. But apart from the inner necessity of pointing out, in the drama, the goal towards which the course of events is tending, this very division of the personal interest belongs to the character of the times represented, to the character of the reign of Henry IV., nay, to the very character of King Henry himself. A person like him is incapable of drawing all interest upon himself; all his actions, his inmost being is divided in itself. He is one of those characters who can excite interest only by their close connection with other entirely different natures; it is only when contrasted with characters such as Richard II. or Henry Percy and his own son, who is so unlike himself, that his

nature acquires light and significance enough for us to take an interest in him. Accordingly, Shakspeare does not hesitate to violate chronology, but even doubly and trebly divides the dramatic unity of the personal interest, and places two strong rivals for public sympathy by the side of the two Henrys, in the persons of young Percy and Sir John Falstaff. We can only admire him for so doing. For in fact, the main point, is, that the true unity of the historical drama consists as little in the unity of the interest in the hero, as in the unity of the action. It lies rather, as already said, in the unity of the *historical idea*, the motive of the historical movement, and thus in the unity of the character and the spirit of the age represented. It is in *this* unity that the public interest should mainly be centred; for history and its motives, the law of its development, the significance of its living hieroglyphics, possesses an interest that stands unquestionably higher than the psychological interest in individual persons.

This unity of the leading thought is, in the present drama, adhered to throughout; both parts of the play give the most vivid representation of the character of the time, and of the internal agitation and ferment of the state. The very first scene speaks of wars that are being waged on the borders by several of the barons of the kingdom. And then, for some trifling cause, the very barons who had been the chief means of Henry's acquiring the royal sovereignty, rebel against him and his usurped power. It is upon the struggle with these barons that the action of the first part turns, and which closes with the victory of the royal troops at Shrewsbury. The second part does, it is true, treat less of external struggles, the war is as good as over, we hear of no more actual battles being fought, but the condition of affairs remains essentially the same. Political intrigues keep the minds of all in a state of tension; and even after the rebels have been completely overpowered by cunning and artifice, and by fortunate accidents, the result is neither rest nor tranquillity. For although their arms are tied and their swords sheathed, yet the old quarrel, the old hatred, and the old unsettled contradiction still

rankles unpacified in their minds. This Henry IV. feels, and expresses clearly enough in Part ii., Act iv. 4. He therefore becomes more and more gloomy; he lives without having any pleasure in life on account of his increasing trouble about establishing his royal power, and the oppressive anxiety about the strange doings of his apparently degenerate son. He dies in the feeling of having striven and struggled in vain to obliterate the wrong that is attached to his throne.

Yet he dies in the proud, outward possession of his sovereignty; his rebellious barons have not succeeded in lessening his power in the slightest degree. This they could not do, because Henry's wrong and Mortimer's better title were to them a mere excuse, a mere mask to their own selfish aspirations. It was not their intention to make good the wrong that had been committed, to settle the sharp conflict, or to heal the diseased body of the state. The state, as such, was nothing to them; their wish was but to increase their own power, to divide the kingdom among themselves, and to do away with the royal title, or, at all events, to make it a mere play-ball for their own interests; this accounts for their recklessly uniting with the Scotch, the sworn enemies of England, and thus acting in direct contradiction to true patriotism. If their plans had succeeded, the inevitable result would have been the total ruin of the country. Their insurrection, therefore, was itself a wrong, a piece of arrogance. Accordingly, in the struggle which ensued, wrong in reality stood opposed to wrong, selfishness to selfishness. Hence it was only the greater *quantity* of material power, only the higher *degree* of mental ability that could decide the question; and consequently the decision must have fallen in Henry's favour, even though his opponents had not been at strife among one another. He was far superior to them all in ability and self-possession, in talent as a king and military commander; what therefore he personally lacked in martial power was compensated for by the innate heroic greatness of his son, the future conqueror of France.

In the representation of these disturbances and civil wars, Shakspeare at the same time shows us the nature of

the *feudal state*, that is, the form which it had acquired during the second half of the Middle Ages. This system had, in the course of time, become an internal contradiction. What had originally been an entirely *personal* relation, proceeding from personal esteem and based upon mutual fidelity and attachment, had changed into a real legal relation, according to which it was no longer the vassals themselves but their landed estates which stood in connection with their feudal lord. The vassal was, it is true, *obliged* to seek investment for his possessions and had no rights without it, but the feudal lord on his part was also *obliged* to grant the investment, if all the legal forms were complied with. Accordingly it was a matter of accident whether the greater amount of possession was concentrated in the hands of one or the other vassal, or in the hands of the sovereign. The individual vassal might easily be more powerful than his feudal chief. At all events the vassals, as a community, had always more power in their hands than the feudal lord himself. Therefore the main strength of the feudal state did not rest upon the power and dignity of the *king*, but upon the accidental relation subsisting between him and the powerful *vassals* of his kingdom. If the proportion between the landed possessions of the latter and the personal power of the sovereign was too unequal, or if the personal relation between the two was disturbed by hate, ambition, or rapaciousness, then the whole organism of the state was likewise disturbed, and sooner or later the country would necessarily become distracted by rebellion and civil war.

This Richard II. had not understood. He had wished to be king in the highest sense of the word, king by the grace of God, hence responsible, alone to God and to his own conscience for what he did and what he left undone. He placed all emphasis upon this absolute idea of royalty, upon its direct foundation upon a higher right, superior to the human will; this idea had originated with the mediæval ecclesiastico-religious view of life, and stood diametrically opposed to the old Germanic institutions and their change into the feudal state. Richard conceived the state as nothing but a country governed by a king, whereas

the state was as much, or even more, a country governed by vassals. It was this misapprehension which rose only from his inclination to arbitrary rule and violence that was the cause of Richard's downfall. The result was a stronger reaction than ever on the part of the vassals against the royal power. The great barons had dethroned Richard, they had tested their power, had remarked that they were, as it were, the life-blood of the state, but, above all, they had tasted the sweets of unlimited power. Hence they dropped their old idea of royal dignity, and intended to secure the *exclusive* power to the *vassal state*.

This gave rise under Richard's successors to a struggle between the vassaldom and the kingdom, as such, a struggle which, indeed, was again a result of the conflict between Henry the Fourth's inward and outward right to the crown, but which, at the same time, possessed an independent historical significance. The struggle is exhibited in the present drama with drastic vividness. Nay, it is the representation of this inner contradiction into which the mediæval idea as to the nature of the state had become involved, and the solution of which could be accomplished only in an *external* manner by the suppression of the one part—it is this contradiction dramatised and brought up to the standpoint of poetry, that more especially constitutes the *special* historico-ideal centre of the drama, and which, in spite of its close connection with 'Richard II.', makes it an independent and in itself a well-finished whole.

In the representation of this contradiction, the emphasis is placed less upon the royal dignity than upon the *vassalry*. For Henry IV. cannot appeal to his right by the grace of God, inasmuch as it was by his own authority that he had assumed the crown. And although he and his adherents frequently reproach their adversaries for rebelling against the Lord's anointed, the title makes no effectual impression. He retains possession of his throne, not through the power of the ecclesiastico-religious idea, but simply through the assistance of the barons who remain faithful to him. The vassals, accordingly, are divided among themselves, but divided owing to motives of essentially the same nature. Henry's knights think they will accomplish their purpose by remaining faithful to him,

his antagonists imagine that they will effect the same result by opposing him. It is in this very schism that the nature of the vassalry, its position and significance, is clearly exhibited. The life of the political state, the weal and woe of the country, appear entirely dependent upon the resolves of the great barons; the vassalry is, so to say, the tonguelet on the scales of political life.

It is in this sense that Shakspeare, in his usual masterly style, describes the vassalry in its chief representatives: the noble, hot-blooded, ambitious, and fool-hardy Percy, who is ever balancing the world on the point of his sword, who has pleasure only in war and military glory, and would stake the welfare of his country for the sake of a single heroic deed; the brave, noble-hearted Douglas, who is as ready to acknowledge Percy's superior military power, as to bid defiance to all the rest of the world, who, out of pure chivalrous gratitude, joins his victorious enemy in a dangerous and unpromising enterprise, although he is not urged on by any personal interest; the cold, calculating, intriguing, and ambitious Worcester, who is more a statesman than a knight, and again but half a statesman and half a knight; the irresolute Northumberland, who never knows whether he shall uphold his princely dignity, his great estates and the welfare of his house, or, like a knight-errant, stake his all upon a single throw; lastly, the double-tongued Archbishop of York, who is half an ecclesiastical prince, and half a vassal, who preaches peace sword in hand, and would like to wed the worldliness of his desires to the holiness of his office;—all these are true Shakspearian characters, full, complete men, and yet, at the same time, but children of their age. In them we have a distinct reflex of the essential elements of vassalry. A state of semi-independence together with a state of semi-dependence; a defiance and arrogance, an ambition and love of dominion which, however, are ever at strife with a feeling of duty towards the kingdom and the king; the endeavour to make themselves strong by alliances, whereas, according to the nature of things, there is no truly uniting bond among them, and all are finally left to do as they please in spite of oaths and treaties;

the contradiction in the knight whose sole object is personal honour and military glory, and the same knight who ought likewise to be a commander and a chief, governing country and people, a statesman and a politician;—all these characteristic features are set forth in delicate but definite outlines.

It is more especially the last-mentioned contrast, into the two sides of which the two halves of our drama are, as it were, divided. In the first part the battle of Shrewsbury forms the catastrophe, the centre and aim of the action. In this part the nature of feudalism is represented more from its chivalrous aspect. The barons, in whom this element predominates, who are more knights than feudal lords—Percy, Douglas, Mortimer and Blount—are the leaders of the events. Hence we have here, of course, pre-eminently a representation of the nature of personal prowess, the foundation of chivalry. Percy is the representative of that inborn, natural valour, that unbridled conceit in the power of the individual I, that reckless courage of the knight-errant which heedlessly throws itself into danger, nay, which finds pleasure in it, and seeks for it, because it is necessary for the development of his nature, for his enjoyment and for the gratification of his ambition. Prince Henry, on the other hand, is the representative of that other and higher valour which is of an entirely intellectual nature, consisting in the mind's conscious superiority over danger, whether it be to overcome it, or to remain the victor in spite of being apparently vanquished; valour such as was displayed by the great historical heroes, Alexander, Hannibal and Julius Cæsar. In order that both species of valour might be clearly exhibited in their effectual and significant contrast, Prince Henry had to receive a prominent place in the drama, and, on the other hand, Percy's character had to be allowed scope in so far that, in all the essential relations of life, as son, husband and friend, he might excite special interest.

In the *second* part of the play, the other and second side of the nature of feudalism is brought more into the foreground. Shakspeare justly looks upon the war as ended; the battle of Shrewsbury has decided the victory

in favour of the royal party. What there remains of the war is so unimportant, that, very properly, it takes place behind the scenes. The question now is, for the king to make the best possible use of his victory, and for the rebellious barons to obtain as advantageous a peace as possible. Political prudence has now to settle matters; hence the dramatic action here consists principally in deliberations and negotiations. The barons, at the very outset, appear inclined to submission; they maintain their position in the field at the head of their army, simply to make an imposing impression. Accordingly, those of them who look upon themselves less as knights than as lords and rulers of the country—old Northumberland and the Bishop of York, Westmoreland and others—stand at the head of affairs. The vassalry is exhibited more from that aspect, where it stands in direct relation with the government, and where the barons occupy a *political* position in the narrower sense, inasmuch as by virtue of their semi-sovereign power over their great estates, they not only represent their own persons but, as lords of the land, have the weal and woe of thousands in their hand. This, Shakspeare has intimated in a beautiful manner by the short intermediate scene with Sir John Coleville (act iv. 3), which has its significance and justification from this very circumstance.

Accordingly the division of the drama into two special halves is perfectly justified; each part has its peculiar historical significance, its own leading thought, which forms the fundamental motive of the action, and the organic centre of the composition.

Yet between the purely historical elements to which we have hitherto confined our attention, and which Shakspeare's masterly skill has combined into a grand and harmonious work of art, between this purely historical representation which is based entirely upon a serious and profound contemplation of history, there are interspersed, in both parts of the drama, scenes of an entirely comic character, not merely to ridicule the serious aspect presented by history, but which seem to stand in no sort of inner connection with the action or with the motives forming its basis. Falstaff and his boon-companions

Poins, Peto, Pistol, Bardolph, Mrs. Quickly, etc., are wholly unhistorical persons. No sort of affinity can be proved to exist between the J. Falstolfe who commanded in the so-called *Bataille des Harengs* under Henry VI., and our knight (Sir John); Shakspeare assuredly never thought of any such connection (as is proved even by the difference of the name, and still more by the circumstance that the famous corpulent knight, in Shakspeare, was originally called Sir John Oldcastle, and re-christened Falstaff only upon a demand of the Puritans who honoured a man of the same name among their sect). Yet these scenes fill almost one half of the whole play. In no other historical drama of Shakspeare's do we find such a total division of the subject. It is true that he has elsewhere introduced comic and freely invented scenes, but always merely incidentally as intermediate scenes, which, as such, if closely examined, always have their good meaning, inasmuch as they are intended to represent some secondary motive of the action. Here, on the other hand, the comic and unhistorical portions are so strikingly elaborate, that the question as to their justification becomes a vital point as regards the historical and æsthetic value of the whole drama.

This question I can answer only with what I have already said in the first two editions of this book, for I still think that my solution is the right one. Shakspeare did not intend merely to enrich the scanty historical subject-matter by a free, poetical addition, or to give it a fresher and more pleasing colour. The principles of art would not have allowed him to act in such a manner; for he should not to have chosen a subject which could not, of its own accord, be formed into an harmonious whole with a truly poetical significance. It was as little Shakspeare's intention merely to give a broader foil to the character of Prince Henry, and thus to allow its peculiar light to be more fully displayed. This he might have accomplished by smaller means, by introducing accounts of the Prince's mode of life or by the addition of a few short scenes. It can also hardly have been Shakspeare's intention in 'Henry IV.' merely to give a representation of the nature of honour and of man's different ideas and

positions in regard to it, and he has assuredly not introduced the Falstaff episode merely in order to contrast the representatives of the idea of honour—the Prince and Percy—with Falstaff, the negative counterpart, the caricature of honour and knighthood. For it is evident that none of the other personages—much less the historical action—stand in any sort of relation to the idea of honour.*

All these views, I think, lie too far from the central point of the action and its significance, to be able to claim to have succeeded in discovering the poet's intention. And yet the artistic object which Shakspeare had in view when composing the comic scenes is after all not so deeply concealed, and becomes quite clear upon a closer examination of all the individual features of the whole. It seems to me that the Falstaff episode bears unmistakably an ironical character; it is a parody on the historical representation. This is the bond that connects it with the latter; it is intended to parody the hollow pathos of the political history, and to assist in scattering the vain, deceptive halo with which it has been surrounded. Irony is to hold up its concave mirror to that mere semblance of history which is so frequently mistaken for history itself, in being considered great and important only where it parades about in its purple mantle with crown and sceptre, higgles about kingdoms, or lays about it with the scourge of war; irony is to exhibit it as what it in reality is, a deceptive, outward semblance. For all that which in the present drama appears outwardly to be historical action—rebellion, dissensions and war, victory and defeat, the intrigues of political cunning, treaties and negotiations with their high-sounding speeches about right and wrong—all this was in truth a mere show, the mere mask of history. The rebellious barons, as already shown, were as little in earnest about simply dethroning the unlawful

* This narrow conception which Gervinus (and with him Kressig, who generally follows him) ascribes to Shakspeare as the fundamental motive of his composition, cannot be justified except from the one-sided and moralising standpoint which Gervinus invariably maintains (even in regard to the historical dramas), and in face of which poor John Falstaff would certainly find no mercy.

king, and about assisting the rightful heir to his inheritance, as Henry himself was about maintaining order in his kingdom, and about protecting the welfare of the country. Henry's reign was in reality not disturbed by external hostilities and attacks, his government was internally weak and corrupt; he and his barons suffered because justice and morality, the foundations of political life, were in a state of decay. No reign, therefore, is so poor in true historical action, in creative, formative and improving ideas, so powerless in establishing new and lasting forms. The reign was of historical importance only as a transition stage in the further development of the great historical tragedy, and accordingly could not be passed over. Taken by itself Henry's reign turns solely upon *outwardly* establishing the usurped sovereignty, and is therefore without true value, without internal animation and without progress to a better state of things. Hence in its outward actions it is wholly absorbed in empty externals and formalities, in semblance and untruth. Henry IV.—whom even Richard II. had described as an excellent actor, and who, in the present drama, himself expressly boasts of his skill in acting—is the chief and greatest among a number of stage heroes, who, it is true, are personally in bitter earnest with the representation of their several parts, but who are nevertheless only acting a play. To give a clear exhibition of this unreality, this semblance, this histrionic parade, was—consciously or unconsciously—the poet's intention in placing the comic scenes so immediately by the side of the historical action, and in allowing them step by step to accompany the course of the latter.

Falstaff's character I have already analysed somewhat closely in chapter vii. Here, although he again forms the centre of the comedy which is interwoven in the drama, he can be considered only as one among many. It must be evident from a first glance that his utterly comic character, with its mixture of satire and parody, is in perfect accordance with the poet's purpose, as intimated above. Both in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' and here, he is in the first place the personified parody on the corrupt state of the chivalry and vassalry of the day.

The striving for outward power, for possessions and dominion is, in reality, no less immoral and material than Falstaff's low theory of happiness, and his thirst for money and estates in order to make practical use of them. His boastful, blustering bravery is an excellent parody on the character of young Hotspur, on the proud Douglas, and on the vain and grandiloquent Glendower; his comic cautiousness, his rambling observations on the nature of warfare and politics, and his thoughts about life and death, and about a future existence, are as excellent a parody on the chief features in the character of old Northumberland, Worcester and the Bishop of York; lastly, his great talent in dissembling, the appearance of virtue which he contrives to assume, the cunning with which he invariably gets himself out of embarrassments, form a parody on the personal character of the King whom he represents in so amusing a manner in the first part. His boon-companions, the cowardly rascals Peto and Gadshill, the bully Pistol with his borrowed pathetic phrases, the ever-thirsty but never sober Bardolph, the shrewd and witty page with his depraved innocence, the intriguing and servile Poins—all these characters which in themselves are indispensable to give the parody a dramatic form, and to prevent the poet's intention being observed, are but the reflexes of Falstaff's individuality and serve as foils to his character. In addition to these we have the Hostess and Doll Tear-Sheet, the two justices Shallow and Silence, Falstaff's recruits and some other subordinate personages, to fill up and to round off the picture, and also to preserve its connection with the other half of the whole.

The comedy, thus equipped, everywhere reflects the historical action in all its essential elements, and Falstaff's humorous personality, the inexhaustible irony with which he ridicules all around him and himself in particular, floats above the historical picture as its parodied image, explaining the significance of the actions and of the events represented. In the first part it is the campaign of Falstaff and his fellows against the travelling merchants, their victory over the latter, and their discomfiture by Poins and the Prince that is the focus of the wit, but

likewise the focus of the withering travesty on the hollow, immoral dispute which, on the one hand, turns upon robbery, and on the other upon the defence of unlawfully acquired property. The directly following scene in the tavern at Eastcheap, where Falstaff, personifying the King, reproaches the Prince about his mode of life, gives a witty and excellent description of the heads of the rebellion as well as of Henry IV. himself, and more especially exhibits the latter's parade of his royal dignity and the same parade in the arrogant, inflated nature of the barons. The scenes at the close, where Falstaff appears at the council of war, and as the conqueror of Percy, are direct parodies on the war itself. In the second part, on the other hand, the trick by which the Prince and Poins mystify the old sinner, and catch him fibbing and prevaricating, parodies the manner in which Falstaff, assisted by his recruits, carries on his deceptive game in deceiving the two justices, by the semblance of great authority and influence which he manages to assume. Lastly, the way he evades the accusation of the Hostess and the sentence of the worthy but rigidly moral judge, until finally all his hopes and plans are disappointed by Henry's conduct after his accession—all this again parodies what is called policy, *i.e.* the common cunning of political prudence which forms the mainspring of the historical action in this part. On the other hand the army of cripples whom Falstaff leads into the field, and his very appearance as a military officer is a delightful satire on the game of war which had become utterly insignificant.

Thus the comic parts illustrate clearly and fully the leading thought of the whole play in both its parts. In the first we are shown that strife and war, in the second that so-called state actions (even though they treat of outwardly important interests, of crowns and principalities) are wholly unable to give history any real historical value; further that this value can be only of an ideal, ethical nature, and that, accordingly, with the rupture of the moral foundation, the organic equilibrium of political life itself is broken; that the course of history (even though outwardly and apparently well-regulated

and entering other paths) is nevertheless internally disturbed and will not admit of the state enjoying rest and peace, till it has again recovered its necessary equilibrium.

It is evident, therefore, that the often-repeated complaint that Shakspeare's play is wanting in unity and inward finish is as unfounded as many other objections raised against the poet. But even the demand of having the so-called unity of interest represented in a single and principal figure (a demand, at all events, not applicable to an historical play) may, in a certain sense, be considered as here fulfilled; for Prince Henry can quite well be regarded as a centre of this kind, if the two dramas are regarded by themselves apart from their connection with 'Richard II.' In disposition and behaviour Prince Henry forms not only the organic contrast to his father, as well as to Percy and the leaders of the rebellion, but he is also the living, separating and uniting link between the comic parts and the serious historical action. His is a character deserving of the careful development which Shakspeare has bestowed upon him throughout the three dramas, and this Hazlitt could not have misapprehended but for the narrowness of his political principles and his unprincipled hatred of monarchy. In fact, in Prince Henry are concentrated all the interests of the history represented; the question is about his title no less than about the King's title; it is for him that his father endures all the cares and troubles of his position: against him that the rebellious barons contend; his victory over Percy decides the course of the whole war; it is to his person that Falstaff and his followers attach themselves, and one word from his lips destroys them at a blow. Hazlitt, Fr. Horn, and others have found this last circumstance hard and unjust, and certainly the poor knight thus suddenly cast out of his paradise does excite some pity, which, however, he himself crushes in the bud by the manner in which he shakes off the bitter experience by a witticism; in rising above it he forces us to grant him a certain amount of respect in consideration of his self-control and imperturbable good humour which rises above all the vicissitudes of fortune. And yet his fate could

positively not have been otherwise, whether regarded from his own or from Henry's point of view. The latter was indeed in no way a hero of virtue; Shakspeare did not wish to represent him as such; on the contrary, it was a decided aberration in Henry's noble nature to enter into so intimate a relation not only with Falstaff himself, but with the latter's companions. This unnatural relation could be broken only by force, the obtrusive rabble had to be driven off with violence and Falstaff was expelled on account of his connection with them. As frequently happens, so also in the present case, the first wrong could be repaired only by a wrong, by inconsistency and unfairness. Nevertheless it cannot be doubted, except by those who judge right and justice merely according to their own momentary feelings, that Falstaff only meets with a just punishment. It would have been the greatest historical as well as poetical mistake to have allowed him, in spite of the wealth of his mind, his wit and humour, finally to obtain honour and authority through his in every respect worthless life.

CHAPTER VIII.

HENRY V.

IF the character of Henry V. is looked upon as the central figure of the play of 'Henry IV.' all the more may the following drama, which bears his name, be regarded as the mere continuation of the preceding one. In fact the piece is but the directly succeeding *third* act of the great tragedy. The outward point of rest which the history of the royal dynasty had gained towards the end of the reign of Henry IV. does not prove lasting till the reign of his successor, and is even then but of short duration. Henry the Fifth's title to the throne is disputed by no one; he is protected against this by his moral power, his manly energy and his truly royal mind. No one ought to venture to set up a mere outward claim, in opposition to such perfect inward right to the throne. And yet the internal restlessness of history, spoken of above is exhibited here also, only in a different manner and in a different direction. In the first place the life of the just and gracious Prince is threatened by the treacherous and murderous designs of a few ambitious and rapacious barons; the blackest ingratitude and faithlessness embitter his position as King and disappoint his fairest hopes. The representation of the conspiracy of the Earl of Cambridge, Grey and Seroop, which is interwoven as an episode, explains the significance of the whole. Accordingly Henry V., following his father's advice as well as his own judgment, has to endeavour to withdraw the attention of the people and the nobles from the internal affairs of the state. Even though the war with France originated in reality from another and deeper reason, still Henry's own personal object was his chief motive in beginning the campaign so hurriedly and almost without preparation. And although the war at

first had an outwardly glorious termination, owing to Henry's heroic strength, and the superior valour and ability of the English nation, still it was this very war which subsequently became a source of misery to England, and gave the first and most powerful shock to the House of Lancaster. For the reign of Henry VI.—in times of peace perhaps beneficial—was in no way equal to cope with the consequences of this war, with the renewal of hostilities with France. Such heavy circumstances necessarily exposed its whole weakness, and, therefore, stimulated the somewhat better entitled members of the royal house, as well as the restless barons, to set up their claims. Accordingly the disturbance of the moral organism of history which had commenced under Richard II. runs through the whole reign of Henry IV. and into that of his successor. We everywhere find an important and significant internal connection which continues throughout a whole century, and this is exhibited by Shakspeare with admirable skill.

The war with France forms the most essential substance of the dramatic action in 'Henry V.' We here have the clearest example of the above-mentioned preponderance of the *epic* element in the historical drama. A war, a great struggle between two chivalrous nations is the poetical subject pre-eminently belonging to the epos; to treat it dramatically is therefore extremely difficult. It is generally imagined that, in history, wars are *made* by individual rulers according to the caprice of their passions, interests or opinions. These certainly do co-operate and are apparently the direct motives of a war. But, in fact, a war between nations, such as is here depicted, is *never* simply *made*; it rather grows up organically like every other historical phenomenon, *i.e.* it proceeds, by reason of internal *necessity*, from the course of history, from the position of fundamental political relations, from the spirit of the age, and from the character of the nations. Accordingly if a poet wishes to describe war historically, he must regard it as a necessary part of the organism of history itself. This will naturally be a task much easier to epic narrative than to the action of a drama. And yet Shakspeare has

succeeded in completing the narrative of incidents, not representable in a drama, by introducing the chorus as prologue, hence with the help of purely external, but thoroughly admissible and appropriate means.

The principal historical feature, the description of the spirit of the age with its relations to the past, and the character of the two belligerent nations is brought out in a truly dramatic style, by giving the utmost animation to the action. Henry IV., on his death-bed, had counselled his son to engage

‘Giddy minds
With foreign quarrels.’

And, in fact, ‘giddiness’ and vacillation were the leading features in the character of the age; the reason of this lay not only in the unjust usurpation of Henry IV., which, owing to the close connection existing between the state and its various members, exercised its influence on the barons and people, but also in the progressive development of the state and of the nation itself. The corporative estates of the kingdom, the clergy, knights and burghers, incited by an *esprit de corps* and by their well-ordered organisation, felt their power and endeavoured to assert it, both against the royal power and against one another. Their disputes among one another would have been of more frequent occurrence had it not been for the fact that, in direct contrast to the French nobility, the English barons generally sided with the commoners, so as mutually to protect their rights against the pretensions of the crown. Each of these several parties endeavoured to promote their own interests and to act with the greatest possible amount of freedom; their active strength naturally strove to find a vigorous sphere of action and would have consumed itself, and thus internally destroyed the organism of the state, had it not succeeded in obtaining vent in an outward direction. In France, on the other hand, the vanity, the excessive arrogance of the court, the nobility and the people desired war in order to realise their proud dream of internal and external superiority; the historical course of the nation’s culture required that it should be thoroughly humbled by misery and wretchedness, other-

wise it would have decayed prematurely through extravagance and effeminate luxury. Moreover in France also, the organism of the state was broken up into so many separate and independent corporations that it required a great and general interest, a great national disaster to preserve their consciousness of mutual dependence and unity.

All this Shakspeare has intimated in a few but vigorous features. But still more clearly are the *characters* of the two *nations* brought forward as the historical motive. The sober, practical patriotism of the English, in the full consciousness of their own strength, could not tolerate the arrogance, the conceit and the frivolity of the French, of which the Dauphin's contumelious embassy to Henry gives so distinct a reflex. The two nations stood opposed to one another like a couple of men who, in spite of the great difference in their natures, both maintain that they are in the right and aim at the same goal; such natures must necessarily come into conflict. The jealousy between France and England had taken root even before the reign of King John and had been called forth by the position of the countries, by the respective forms of their political life as well as by the family connections between the two royal houses. This jealousy, which had spread from the throne down to the lowest classes of the people could not but gradually degenerate into national hatred.—Shakspeare, with great discrimination, has not left it wholly unnoticed even in his 'Richard II.' and in 'Henry IV.'—Thus war became inevitable and was necessarily popular on both sides.

Every national war, owing to its very nature, demands that in the representation of it. scope be given to the co-operation and action of the *people*. In 'King John,' therefore, the emphasis is more particularly placed on the relation between Church and State, as the general foundation of the historical development; in 'Richard II.' on the royal dignity, and in 'Henry IV.' on the significance of the vassalry; in the present case, however, prominence is given to the people, in the narrower sense, *i.e.* its relation to the state and the other members of the body politic, the manner in which it takes part in the struggle and its opinion of the historical events. Wherever we have a

mind like that of Henry V. which seems born to rule, which towers above all and guides all, we find that the nobles and grandees of the kingdom naturally retire to the background and attach themselves more to the people. It is this circumstance which constitutes the poetical necessity of all those scenes where captains, lieutenants, corporals, soldiers and even *vivandières* are prominently brought into the foreground, where the king is represented as holding intercourse with his people, or sitting in council with his military commanders, and where even the different characters of the various nationalities are embodied in appropriate representatives (as Fluellen, Macmorris, Jamy).

The true historical significance of the war is, however, at the same time thoroughly poetical, and I have no hesitation in maintaining that this representation of the war in its historico-poetical significance is the central idea and fundamental thought of the play. Every war is essentially a *divine judgment* in the same sense in which history itself is the judgment of the world. Its beginning as well as its issue is the result and will of a higher guidance of things, whether we trace it to God, to fate, or to any other superhuman power;—this view pervades the whole play and is expressed by Henry himself where, in act iii. 7, he says:

We are in *God's* hand, brother, not in theirs.

These words, and the splendid scene to which they belong—the eve before the eventful day at Agincourt which decided the fate of two great nations—diffuse a wonderful seriousness over the whole representation. The drama imperceptibly becomes a peaceful, religious service. It is a religious feeling that comes over us when we see that a handful of wearied and almost famished Englishmen, led by their own and their king's heroism and trust in God, defeat an army of well-equipped, well-fed Frenchmen, three or four times their number; and when we see that, according to ethical laws and points of view, a higher power reigns on that side which, although outwardly weak, is spiritually and morally the stronger, in order to help them to vanquish their opponents who are outwardly superior

but frail from inward weakness. With the deep insight and the modesty of a truly great hero, Henry himself acknowledges this when, after the battle, he exclaims (iv. 8):

O God, thy arm was here,
And not to us, but to thy arm alone,
Ascribe we all.'

And yet the object of war ought not only to be to urge nations and their leaders to develop their mental and moral powers, not only, as in the present case to give scope to various characters (especially to Henry's great and yet simple nature) to develop their inner life in its fullness, and to display the many different points, qualities and powers which would otherwise perhaps never have become manifest. The aim of war ought above all things to be the moral purification of nations and individuals. That this was the case here, Shakspeare has distinctly shown in the state of the French and English armies, but more especially in the person of Henry V. himself, who, until then, was but a rough diamond, and although partially cleansed from its dross by the death of the father, appears now, for the first time, cut and polished, and shining in its native splendour. That which is incorrigible finds its punishment and ruin in the war under God's chastisement. Accordingly the poet again introduces us to Falstaff's boon-companions, Nym, Bardolph and Pistol, and shows us the ignominious but just fate which such characters deserve. We even have an account of Falstaff's death, in the form of an episode, so that not the smallest particle of the whole poetical creation should be lost, but that each one finds his due, and that each part of the action may have its beginning, middle and end.

In this scene the significance of the war coincides with the nature and the objects of history itself. For inasmuch as the poet describes the war as a divine judgment, partly as carrying out the justice pervading history, partly as a lever to the historical development and the means of advancing the civilization of mankind, he, at the same time, grasps and depicts history itself in one of its most important movements.

But Shakspeare has not—as we have hitherto done—

neglected to consider the deep internal reason of the great national war, its immediate, external causes, or the special circumstances and relations which called it forth. The war begins, in the first instance, about a disputed *claim*, and the drama opens with an inquiry into it. Henry's external, legal right may appear doubtful, though he himself weighs and considers this point with great conscientiousness, but his internal right is all the more undoubted, and England, therefore, gains the victory. And as the war has its outward cause and beginning, so it must also have its outward termination; the disputed *claims* must be brought to a final decision. This end, according to *history*, is Henry's marriage with Catherine of France, whereby, at the same time, his title to the French throne is acknowledged and secured to him on the death of Charles VI. The end of the drama is the same, and has often enough been censured because of the love-scenes and preliminary arrangements for the nuptials in the fifth act, which certainly do appear but little in keeping with the serious, weighty, heroic and epic substance of the first four acts. But this, in fact, only brings the war to an *outward* termination, its true *internal* conclusion does not come about till several decades later, when Henry had long been in his grave. However, on the one hand, the drama does not stand alone, it is only a part of a larger whole, and its off-shoots extend far into the great trilogy which follows it. On the other hand, those who censure the conclusion, have misunderstood the natural and internal connection between making war and celebrating marriage. It is the same connection as between life and death. As war arises out of peace, by the accumulated forces of peace, seeking vent in an outward direction where friction and collision are always to be found, so war is the father of peace; it is in this case only can it be called a just war. Now the truest picture of thriving peace is marriage, the foundation of the family, the germ of a new and vigorous life. It is certainly true that a peace thus made does not bring any true pacification, inasmuch as it is concluded by princes alone, not by the nations; accordingly, because it is *made* externally and has not proceeded from history. But can we blame the poet for this? If his work is torn

out of its organic connection with the following dramas, then the concluded peace can and must be regarded as a true and permanent point of rest, then it is the natural end of the war, as well as of the drama. If, however, it be considered in the connection in which it actually stands, then the real termination will be found in the play of 'Henry VI.,' and the termination of 'Henry V.' then forms but a point of transition containing the same important lesson which runs through the whole piece, namely, that war, and hence peace also, cannot be made arbitrarily. This is perhaps the reason, as Schlegel justly remarks, why Shakspeare has treated the fifth act with peculiar irony and humour.

Moreover, the above objections have arisen in most cases from the one-sided theory that every historical play ought to be either a tragedy or a comedy. 'Henry V.' is obviously neither the one nor the other, and this is a fault, not indeed theoretically, but in so far as it is connected with the entire want of an interesting plot, and of all dramatic substance in the narrower sense. For the issue of the war is known at the outset from history; and the war itself, the battle and its result, are of course not represented, merely reported, in the most vivid manner, it is true. This defect lies so deeply in the nature of the subject, that it could not well be removed. Hence the effect produced by the drama when performed by itself, cannot be compared with that invariably produced by Shakspeare's other historical dramas; for this play more than any other is but a single member in the great cyclic whole composed of the English histories. For this very reason I am convinced that it was not often given alone on Shakspeare's stage, but merely in connection with other plays, either as an after-play to 'Henry IV.,' or as a prelude to 'Henry VI. ;' in connection with the whole it produces its full effect.*

As 'Henry V.,' in form and substance, is but the continuation and conclusion of 'Henry IV.,' the play was no doubt written by Shakspeare directly after the second

* This was proved on the occasion of the performance of the whole cycle in Weimar in celebration of the 300th anniversary of Shakspeare's birthday.

part of 'Henry IV.' The earliest quarto of the first part appeared in 1598, probably soon after the 25th of February, under which date it is entered at Stationers' Hall. It was probably printed not long after its first representation. For, that 'Henry IV.' met with the greatest and most universal applause, and that it was one of the most popular pieces on Shakspeare's stage, may be inferred from the universal approbation it invariably receives in our own day, and is moreover proved by the fact that of the first part there appeared no less than six different quartos, even before the folio edition (the second as early as 1599 with the remark, 'newly corrected by W. Shakspeare'), and that after the publication of the folio, two other special editions were issued (1632 and 1639). The first part therefore probably appeared on the boards at the end of 1596 or at the beginning of 1597. This conjecture is supported not only by the circumstance that 'Henry IV.' is mentioned by Collier* but also that the second part, as Collier* has proved, appeared as early as the 25th of February 1598, hence that it must have been written at latest in the year 1597. Lastly, the first part is so closely connected with 'Richard II.,' and shows so much resemblance to it in diction, versification, composition &c., that no more time can well have elapsed between the two plays than Shakspeare's vigorous genius may have required to make another mighty advance in its career. For that 'Henry IV.' must be ranked higher than 'Richard II.' in a poetical as well as an artistic point of view, is acknowledged by almost all critics. The second part again, of which the first and only quarto did not appear till 1600, was doubtless followed directly by 'Henry V.' The first quarto of it is of the same date (1600) and was again twice published (in 1602 and 1608); the first quarto, however, is evidently one of those 'pirated' editions taken down from the lips of the actors, and gives the text in a very mutilated and corrupt form. This is again a proof of the great success which 'Henry V.' met with on its first appearance. That the play was first performed in the summer of 1599 is

* In his edition of *Shakspeare*, iv. 309.

clearly evident from the lines in the chorus to the fifth act, which begin with the words 'As, by a lower but by loving likelihood,' etc. These lines beyond all doubt refer to the Earl of Essex, the commander of the Queen's troops, who had been sent to Ireland in April 1599 to suppress the rebellion, and had returned in September of the same year. As Meres does not mention the play, it was assuredly not known in 1598, and consequently it may also be assumed that the above lines were perhaps introduced at a later date. Shakspeare, therefore, probably wrote it in the winter of 1598-99; and to judge from a certain carelessness in the diction and composition, as well as from several disturbing excrescences (among which I reckon the lessons in English given to the Princess Catherine—they are at all events very superfluous—and the scene between Pistol and Le Fer), I am inclined to conclude that the play may have been sketched rather hurriedly, perhaps in order to have it brought upon the stage during the Irish campaign, or shortly after its termination, to contribute to the celebration of the victory of the English arms.

CHAPTER IX.

HENRY VI. FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD PARTS.

THE general features of the historical significance and importance of the long reign of Henry VI. have already been stated. What France experienced under the powerful hand of Louis XI., England suffered under the weak government of Henry VI. It might seem as if the thought which, as already intimated, is reflected in Henry's life is the same which has erroneously been supposed to exist in Hamlet's, and that it forms Shakspeare's leading idea in the composition of this trilogy. But this is obviously not the case. An historical drama is not *biographical*, but *historical*, and therefore, in addition to the usual dramatic characters, scope must also be given to the people and the state in their relation to other nations. Moreover, the significance and importance of an historical drama never proceeds merely from the character of single individuals, even though eminent personages, but from the connection of events, from the immediate historical past which it succeeds.

Accordingly the drama advances from the representation of the war between the two nations—in its poetico-historical sense—to the representation of the *civil war*, which stands in the same relation to the former as poison to medicine. This advance, upon a closer examination, proves to be the first necessary link in the organism of the great tragedy, of which the reign of Henry VI. forms the *fourth* act. For a complete cure is effected only by an antidote to the poison. The unstable foundation upon which the royal house of Lancaster stands, *i. e.* the original disturbance in the natural course of history, as well as the immorality, the arrogance, the ambition and selfishness into which the power of the English aristocracy had degenerated—ultimately produced its own antidote in the

factionous dispute about the crown between the White and Red Roses. The poet again reminds us of the original disturbance of history by giving a description of the death of old Mortimer, the unfortunate pretender to the throne in opposition to Henry IV. and V.; by this means he reminds us of the connection of the whole cycle. The question is no longer—as in the reign of Henry IV.—merely about the struggle of single rebellious barons against the royal power; we now have an actual civil war, *i.e.* the dissolution of all social ties, all the various members of the state thrown into hate and strife with one another, and this forms the actual centre of the drama. The soil from which it historically proceeds is the general demoralisation of the whole nation, and it arises from this soil as long as evil is coupled with outward power and strength of will; vice there struggles against vice, sin and crime against crime and sin, till they ultimately destroy one another. No drama, therefore, shows more distinctly than ‘Henry VI.’ and its continuation ‘Richard III.,’ how the two sides of tragedy and comedy—according to their ethical significance—meet in the historical drama, and become blended into a higher unity. Evil here invariably finds its own corrective in evil; moral weakness and depravity, folly and vice, neutralise each other as in comedy. The good does indeed ultimately maintain the victory, but not in the Present or to the advantage of the *dramatis personæ*, but in the Future, beyond the action represented, that is, in the further course of events. The Present is affected by the tragic pathos, and the latter manifests its power not only in the destruction of evil, but also in the ruin of what is beautiful, noble and great in man. For in the general decay of the nation and of the spirit of the age, the virtue of single individuals can never remain wholly unaffected, inasmuch as no single person stands isolated, but is an organic member of humanity, a child of his time, a son of his nation. The general decay must affect him also, as one foul spot on an apple infects the whole fruit, and conversely it is only the corrupted state of the whole that produces the rottenness of a particular spot.

This is the grave significance of the trilogy which bears

the name of 'Henry VI.', as conceived from its tragic point of view. In various modifications this thought runs through all its three parts, because it directly coincides with the historical and poetical significance of the civil war. As the preceding drama showed us the internal connection between history and a power superior to human will and knowledge—by representing the war between the two nations as essentially a Divine judgment—so the civil war depicted here expresses the same higher connection, in so far as the civil war is conceived but as a corrective antidote for the restoration of the unsoundness of the whole, and in so far as what is good and beautiful in humanity has merely to be cleansed and purified by suffering and death. This is the other, the comforting, conciliatory side of the tragic pathos which pervades the whole. The life and fate of Henry VI. reflect both aspects in the most direct and clearest manner. For his life forms the foundation and, so to say, the connecting link to the several parts. Henry, it is true, *does* nothing; he merely suffers, entreats and prays; but all that happens, falls back upon his own head, and his very inactivity is the main cause of all the events and occurrences. Accordingly, in the present case also, the interest is apparently divided in various ways. A principal portion is always claimed by the King and his family, but in the First Part our attention is likewise attracted by the fortunes of Talbot and his son in the struggle against France, in the Second Part by Gloster's fate and York's successes, and lastly, in the Third Part, by Edward's actions. And yet even in this case the true unity of the interest is obviously preserved in the historical interest and its ethical character. Let us therefore examine the three parts more closely.

The *First Part* forms the real conclusion to 'Henry V.', for it is here that we have the termination of the war which was there represented. It ends to the advantage of France, and in the first place because the right, in its ethico-historical significance, has changed sides. For although the French people and the nobility do not prove themselves better, simply more prudent and wiser by experience, still, on the other hand, their arrogance and

thoroughly senseless vanity had apparently diminished, and their esteem for their adversaries was already the beginning of victory. On the other hand—and this is the main point—England had lost her moral superiority. In the very first introductory scene, we distinctly see how it has degenerated, owing to the selfish intrigues and quarrels of the nobility, in which the people also have now become involved. Single features of the war—for instance, Fastolfe's cowardly, ignominious flight—prove that the people and the army are no longer animated by the old spirit. The play opens with the coffin of Henry V. lying in state, thus representing the grave of the English victories and conquests. These had necessarily to be lost, sooner or later, for it was a grand mistake, but nevertheless a mistake, to suppose that the England of the day could maintain a *lasting* supremacy over France. As long as the political and national energy of an independent country is not wholly broken, it cannot sink so far as to become a mere province of another. This error only maintained the semblance of truth for a short time, because of the moral weakness of the French people, and because of the heroic energy of Henry V. If France had again rallied, the conquest could not have been maintained even by a monarch more powerful than Henry VI., because, when more closely examined, it contained an unjust presumption, as unjust as every attempt to enslave the liberty of a man as long as he is morally capable of freedom. The same justice which had formerly weighed in England's favour, ultimately turns the scales against her.

As this unhappy termination of the war corresponds with the spirit and character of the whole trilogy, intimated by the above discussion, so we have it reflected in a peculiar colouring in the character, the doings and the fate of the Maid of Orleans. She is, as it were, the soul of the re-kindled war on the French side, as Talbot represents it on that of England. With her appearance the fortune of war turns from England to France, because she succeeds in arousing the French nation to enthusiastic patriotism by faith in a higher and divine aid. The poet does not deny the existence of this higher aid, which is

represented in Joan, but, as a true Englishman, he looks upon it as the aid of ungodly, demoniacal powers. The enthusiastic rise of the French nation with the appearance of Joan la Pucelle he considers as a stirring of the night-side of nature, as an interference of the evil principle. He therefore becomes untrue to himself, and sins against the principle of the historical drama, which demands strict impartiality for the inner motives and great turning points in the course of history. We have a proof of how this error—which was as much an error against the laws of poetry—takes its revenge, for the character of Joan is not only untrue, but also unpoetical. From the very fact of Shakspeare not being aware of this, and from his having here entirely followed the English view and the English authorities in regard to the history of the time, we might infer (even though it were not otherwise established) that the First Part of 'Henry VI.' is one of Shakspeare's youthful works, written at a time when he did not as yet possess a clear idea of what an historical drama should be, in order to be free from the faults of blind patriotism and national prejudice. On the other hand we have an excuse for the poet in the circumstance that Shakspeare's conception of the character of Joan of Arc was quite in keeping with the opinions of the English nation, nay, that it corresponded pretty closely with the *general* opinion of the whole age to which the history belongs. For an *historical* drama, which represents its substance as actually *present*, ought at the same time to depict the spirit and character of *the age* in which it moves. And moreover it was one of the features in the character of the age, that it was incapable of comprehending that which was great, pure, and noble, nay, that what was good and beautiful could not even keep itself quite pure. For Joan of Arc does not appear quite pure even according to French authorities, nor according to our modern and more accurate historical investigations. That she was inspired by a great and beautiful thought before her appearance in public, is intimated even by Shakspeare through the rumour which he allows to precede her appearance, and his fault is only in having merely intimated it, and in not having given us a vivid

representation of it. But Shakspeare must certainly have had some object in introducing this intimation; at all events it is in excellent keeping with the spirit and ideal character of the whole trilogy, especially of the First Part. For if we follow this intimation, we shall have to assume that Joan—in order to realise her great and beautiful thought in *such a time*, i.e. when she entered actively into the current of events—did give herself up to the evil principle; whether she did this voluntarily, or was overpowered by it, is a point which the poet could justly leave undecided, as it was a matter of indifference to his purpose. In history, and hence in Shakspeare, she therefore fell the victim to the tragic fate which, like a fearful spectre, wanders through the whole trilogy.

Joan's death when conceived in this light, appears at the same time the organic contrast to that of the Earl of Salisbury, of Lord Talbot and his son. Lord Talbot is obviously the noblest character in the whole play, a rough and vigorous knight; battle and war, self-devoted patriotism, knightly honour and bravery, these have constituted his entire life; all higher ideas seem beyond him; he knows how to win a battle, but not how to carry on a war; he is an excellent military captain, but no general, no chief, because, although valiant and even discreet and prudent (as is proved by his interview with the Countess of Auvergne), he does not possess either presence of mind, creative power, or a clear insight into matters. This, together with the harshness and roughness of his virtue, which has in it something of the rage of the lion, is his weak point, and proves the cause of his death. His power was not equal to the complicated circumstances and the depravity of the age; under the iron rod of chastisement, he became equally unbending and iron; he is the representative of the rage and ferocity of the war, to which he falls a victim because he is wholly absorbed in it and therefore unable to become the master in directing it. In such days, however, the honourable death of a noble character proves a blessing; victory and pleasure are found in death when life succumbs to the superior power of evil, to the weight and misery of a decline which affects both the nation and the state.

This is the special modification of the theme which is carried out throughout the play, the special task which the First Part has to solve, and to the solution of which the other parts have to contribute their share. Henry VI., who in himself is pious and innocent and by nature unimpassionate, is led by Suffolk's seductive arts to break his royal word and his already plighted troth, and to conclude his unfortunate marriage with Margaret of Anjou. Even he cannot keep himself pure, and, inasmuch as in youthful levity he follows his sensual desires, he himself lays the foundation of his subsequent unhappy life. Gloster's honest, high-minded and truly patriotic nature is likewise carried away by party spirit and passion. The quarrel between him and the bishop of Winchester, which has also affected their retainers, the jealousy between Somerset and Richard of York, the powerlessness of old Bedford and Exeter—all this helps to bring about the death of Talbot, the impending and soon no longer inevitable destruction of all the better minds. The citizens and people do not as yet take any direct part in the dissensions of the nobility, the Mayor of London appears more in the light of a mediator, and a promoter of peace. Still some incidents, such as the brawls among the serving men, the cowardliness of Falstolfe and his troops show that the people are already affected by the general state of corruption. In the following parts this, accordingly, is brought more prominently forward.

After France is lost and the foreign war is at an end, the *Second Part* shows us the whole wide tissue of the party feuds (with their intrigues, struggles and atrocities) in which the home policy of England has become involved and of which the First Part gave us only an intimation. The enmity between Gloster and the bishop of Winchester breaks out with renewed fury after a semi-reconciliation; the jealousy between the Dukes of York and Somerset continues, and passes over into actual hate. In addition to this the Queen, through Suffolk's instrumentality, forms a party for herself, and joins the bishop of Winchester in order to bring about the ruin of Gloster. Richard, duke of York, throws aside his mask and appears openly as the pretender to the throne; he is supported by

the powerful Neviles—the earls of Salisbury and Warwick. Thus the civil war has at last unfolded its bloody banner in full earnest. The noble Gloster, the mainstay of the tottering kingdom, is caught in the above intrigue and assassinated. Northumberland, Clifford, Buckingham and Stafford, the best men on the King's side, fall in battle; but the worthless Somerset also, the wicked, utterly demoralised and cunning priest Winchester, and the thorough scoundrel Suffolk likewise come to an untimely end. The only survivors are the Duke of York with his followers and sons, one of which is, the fearful Richard (afterwards the Third), and the equally fearful Queen with a few of her adherents. Death and destruction gather in a rich harvest, the great and the little, the good and the bad, are carried along together. For in times of such general decline, good is no longer good, evil no longer evil; in the general state of corruption, the boundary lines between the two domains are effaced. Virtue is no longer virtue when, as in the case of Gloster, Buckingham and Clifford, it is coupled with passionate rage and party hatred; evil acquires a semblance of right when good confronts it in such a misshapen form. In such times the death of a noble man is but an unsuccessful attempt to live, and vice must necessarily maintain its ground because it alone is consistent. This is the terrible truth of the drama, which is as terrible as its teacher history. The latter, as already frequently remarked, demands, above all things, active and consistent energy; if this is found on the side of the good, then the good will invariably maintain the ascendancy which it possesses of itself; if, however, it exists on the side of the bad, then the good must succumb, because, in fact, without consistency and energy it cannot be truly good. Evil must and ought to be victorious so that it may destroy itself, because the good when itself imperfect, cannot subdue it. The victory of evil is, in fact, its own annihilation.

Viewed in this light, every thread of the very complicated tissue appears to be well arranged, and no scene superfluous. Even the companion-piece to the sorceries of La Pucelle, the incantation scene which is the cause of the death of the ambitious Duchess of Gloster, and which

ruins her husband's authority; and again the secondary characters (Horner the armourer and Peter his man, Simpcox the impostor, Jack Cade and his followers) are full of significance, because they show that in such times even the most unusual aberrations in a character, noble in itself, do not appear strange. They prove that such times are possible only when all moral and religious reverence is set at nought, the most sacred principles being employed for falsehood and deception, and give a clear picture of how the general 'giddiness' has also affected the lower classes of society and led them into excesses of all kinds; they further show that in such times all civil order as well as Art and Science and all that promotes the higher civilization of man, is threatened with utter ruin. These secondary parts, with their comic colouring, form a parody on the substance of the historical action, and exhibit—much in the same manner as the Falstaff episode in 'Henry IV.'—evil as irrational, stupid and ridiculous, which, in reality, it always is, in spite of its deep, serious significance.

As regards the conception of the character of the Queen which is first revealed to us in this part, some commentators have blamed Shakspeare for having unnecessarily made her a hideous Megæra, and maintain it to be especially intolerable to see the pious, unfortunate King so openly represented as a deceived husband. It is certainly true that in Margaret's character we still have the echo of those gloomy sounds of the horrible which in 'Titus Andronicus' we had in the fullest reverberations, and this again proves with tolerable certainty that the two last parts of 'Henry VI.,' likewise belong to Shakspeare's earlier works. It is also true that adultery did not require to be added to the other crimes of the Queen. And yet without it we should not have received such a perfect insight into her character, which is so important for the whole play. For it is self-evident that such an energetic, violent and thoroughly unfeminine nature, with such passionateness and heat of temper, could not have had any affection for the cold, unmanly and effeminate King, or have remained faithful to him. Hence even though history has not expressly told us of it—however, if not

mentioned by Holinshed (as Gervinus says) it is expressly stated in Grafton's (Hall's) Chronicle—the poet at all events could not be silent on a subject, which, as a matter of consistency, was demanded by history. Moreover, this terrible energy and enormity, this shameless display of evil, such as is here exhibited in a woman, is no doubt more dramatic, nay the very representation of it is more moral than the secret sin which creeps along in darkness, and the unexpressed suspicion of which must be entertained by the spectators. In fact, the poet required an embodiment of the prevailing vices and crimes, a character in which was concentrated the whole demoralisation of the age, in order to give a description of the times, and to unfold the meaning and significance of his drama in the fullest manner. The fury-like Margaret has a worthy contrast in the devil Richard; both characters complete each other, they learn of each other and thus mutually become the mighty instruments of the fearful judgment which, at the end of the reign of Henry VI. bursts over England and its degenerate royal family. Lastly, the character of the King, which had become effeminate and unmanly, required, as an organic contrast, a woman who had become masculine and depraved in character. For Henry's disgrace as a deceived husband was the consequence of his own fault in having allowed himself, with the disposition he possessed, to be persuaded to take such a wife. This his first and only active sin—all his later sins are but errors of omission—had accordingly to be more prominently brought forward in order to show how even the smallest germ of evil shoots up like rank weeds and becomes incalculable in the mischief it produces. The Queen reigns in the King's place, and turns bad into its very worst. He, thrust back by her love of dominion, sinks more and more into the mere semblance of a king; even the open infidelity of his wife no longer rouses him, and thus his peaceful, pious, humble nature—otherwise worthy of the highest praise—acquires more and more the appearance of the most sinful weakness of character and want of energy. Accordingly, in Henry's relation to Margaret, we again have, in a new modification, the reflection of the fundamental idea of this Second Part

of the drama, whereby the character of the Queen is perfectly justified in a poetical point of view.

The *Third Part* shows us, in the very first scene, York and his sons in the full pride of victory. The King's party is vanquished; compelled to purchase peace, the King has to promise that, after his death, the succession shall pass over to York and his descendants, and he thus robs his own son of his inheritance. However, the Queen and young Edward rebel against husband and father, and refuse to consent to the arrangement. The scattered forces of the royalists reassemble under their banners; York is surprised at the very moment when he has himself come to the decision to break his oath, and to drive the King from the throne, and is put to death with the most cruel insults and mockery. Soon, however, the fortune of war again changes; tho Queen, defeated by Warwick and the sons of York, flies to seek help abroad; Henry is taken prisoner, and Edward IV., York's eldest son, ascends the throne. But his indecision as quickly causes him to be deposed; for being unable to control himself, he cannot exercise undisputed control over others. France, supported by the aggrieved Earl of Warwick, again comes to Margaret's assistance, this time in order to attack distracted England on her own ground.

So completely has the relation as regards inward right changed sides, so deeply has England sunk, and still there is no prospect of deliverance. The struggle begins with renewed fury. The best men have fallen, and nothing can make up for their loss; the wicked rise up with increased vigour and continue to gain in ascendancy. For such times produce sons worse than their fathers; we have a proof of this in the sons of York and the King, in young Clifford and young Buckingham, etc. Thus heavy clouds continue to gather round the dark horizon, while King Henry—first driven to flight, then to prison—is lost in the solitude of prayer and religious meditation. And what is the subject of his thoughts? In act iii. 1, he calls himself—

“A man at least, for less I should not be.”

and a king whose 'crown is call'd content;' and again says,—

“What God will, that let your king perform;
And what He will, I humbly yield unto.”

He has no will of his own; with a prophetic eye he looks into the future, and dies with a prayer on his lips, beseeching forgiveness for himself and his murderer. Death throws a halo of glory over his troubled life. His last moments bear witness to a great strength of soul, which is altogether turned inwards, to complete abnegation and the renunciation of all mere worldly interests; these he has acquired through the sufferings of his earthly existence.

Herein may be found the deep ethical truth which this last part of the trilogy unfolds before us. In such times, as are here described, man is not complete master of himself, because the ground upon which he is standing is unsteady, and because he is but a single member of a thoroughly diseased organism. In such times it is only a mighty spirit sent by God that can restore order; as long as this higher messenger does not appear, evil must continue to rage until it has consumed itself. Henry, after having, by his own weakness and inactivity, himself been the cause of the mischief, then becomes an example to all, to bear the consequences nobly. The man who, in such times, does not feel himself animated by the higher spirit, had better *suffer* than act; he *ought* to look upon the times as a visitation from God,* and to resign himself in calm hope; he *ought*, by submitting to it, to rise above the vanity and transitoriness of this earthly existence; he *ought* to suffer, and suffers justly, because he *cannot* act, that is, he cannot act truly and morally where in the general state of corruption, right and wrong, good and evil appear wrought into an inextricable knot. Who can presume to decide whether York or Lancaster is in the right? Is it not more likely that both are in the wrong, and hence that all those who support the one or the other side are wrong also!

Such relations are not only of occasional occurrence in history; they are met with every day, more particularly

where nations are in a state of discord, rebellion and civil war. For contending factions are invariably in the wrong, because they could never have come into collision without their having disturbed and disorganised Church and State—which rank higher than they do—and consequently without their having separated themselves from the moral foundations of human existence. And the more extensive the quarrel becomes, the more that it embraces all life—a firm standpoint becoming a matter of impossibility—the less should the individual man presume to come to a determination of his own; he ought then humbly to leave history and a higher guidance to untie the knot and to pass the verdict.

Because wholly wanting in this humility, Margaret, after a short glimmer of good fortune, ruins herself, her husband, and her son. And because the latter and young Rutland, as beardless boys, venture precociously into the mighty torrent of fatal events which they hardly understood, they are justly swallowed up by the powerful elements. Further, because York would not rest satisfied in his own sphere, he falls beneath the cruel hands of his enemies, and soon after him the unhappy King himself pays the penalty for not having at the outset done that which he ought to have done, namely, to resign the office which he had neither the power nor the right to maintain. Again, because Warwick the King-maker, in proud arrogance, believed himself called upon to play the judge, where he ought prudently to have awaited his verdict, his life comes to an end after all his endeavours and efforts have proved of no avail. Clifford, Somerset, Oxford and others meet with an untimely end, because they supported a party where right and wrong fluctuated in indecision, and where in reality both sides were in the wrong. Edward IV., because he was not able to control himself, much less able to manage the difficult circumstances of restoring order in the distracted state, and further, because he presumed to undertake what he is incapable of performing, is precipitated from the throne which he had scarcely mounted, and although restored to it, we hear from his brother's (Richard's) words, that he will not long maintain possession of it. Lastly, the same fate (at

the end of the drama) hangs over the heads of Lady Grey and her family, because they had allowed themselves to be persuaded to assume a place in history, to which neither she nor her lineage possessed any right or qualification.

Accordingly, in all three parts we have a reflection of the same law, of the same conception of history, which again is but a modification of the fundamental theme of the whole trilogy; all the parts gather round one central point and arrange themselves into one great whole. At the end of the trilogy Richard, afterwards the Third, comes conspicuously into the foreground. He, the terribly consistent, wholly ignorant of pity, love, and fear, an outcast nature, and born to be an executioner, he it is, in reality, alone remains in the possession of full and vigorous strength—as the dregs of the antidote to the poisoned age—and introduces the last act of the great tragedy.

Let us again take a survey of the whole trilogy, the construction of which I have endeavoured to sketch. We have history represented in its degeneration into civil war, which is the consequence of the original disturbance of its course and of the general demoralisation which increases with it. This is the theme upon which the *whole trilogy* is based, and which exhibits the two sides of life according to Shakspeare's conception. The three *parts* then show the principal stages in the development of such a state of things. History, when so degenerate, first of all casts out those that are good and noble but who are nevertheless not wholly unaffected by the spirit of their age, and at the same time shows that the great and pure are not understood and that they cannot keep themselves entirely pure. This is exhibited in the *First Part* by the events belonging to it (and hence, because appropriate here only, Shakspeare introduces Talbot's death into this first part in violation of the laws of chronology). History then continues falling into a wild state of chaos, where right and wrong flow into one another and can no longer be distinguished, and consequently where the bad and the good, or, to speak more correctly, the bad and those that are less bad are drawn into the general vortex. This is the second stage

of which we have a representation in the *Second Part*. Having arrived at this climax, history demands that man shall not interfere with its course, and refrain from having any determination of his own, and that he shall leave all action to that man whom it has itself chosen to restore order. It therefore punishes every uncalled-for interference as unauthorised presumption, whereas the submissive spirit is inwardly exalted and glorified through suffering and death. This is the thought which connects the events of the *Third Part* into an organic unity.

CHAPTER X.

RICHARD III.

THE *fifth* act of the great tragedy, that is, the play of King 'Richard III.' will not require a long discussion, for the significance of the piece is clear from our previous disquisition, and the celebrated character of Richard has been discussed, criticised, and examined from so many points of view, that I have but little to add. Hazlitt, also, who, after Coleridge, is one of England's best æsthetic critics, merely analyses the characters, and speaks incidentally of the great actor, Edward Kean. I shall, therefore, leave the reader to collect what is best from the chief commentators and critics.*

But I must here observe that however successful and life-like, however many-sided and extraordinary a character may be, it cannot of itself constitute a dramatic work of art. Characterisation is but one particular function of dramatic poetry; it is very important, but still not the first and highest object. It stands in the same relation to the entire organism as a portrait to an historical painting. In the latter every figure ought to be a living portrait full of individual reality, but receives its true significance only from its position and from its relation to the other figures; accordingly, the *interaction* of the several parts among one another, and their *cooperation* in the action represented, gives the picture its historical character. It is precisely the same with a dramatic composition because it is so in real *life*. When viewed in this

* My German readers I refer to Rötcher, Vischer and Gervinus, but more especially to W. Oechelhäuser, who (*Jahrb. d. D. Shakspeare Gesellschaft*, vol. iii.) has recently most thoroughly examined the character of Richard III. from all points, and not merely as he stands in the drama which bears his name, but also as he appears in the two last parts of *Henry VI*.

light, 'Richard III.' might seem open to censure. 'I am myself alone' is his spell-word, and, like a sudden flash of light, reveals not only the character of Richard himself, but that of the whole drama. As in life so in the play, he in reality stands *alone*. All the other personages (chiefly women and children, or single subjects) are in no way his equals, and are powerless against the whole royal power which is on his side. The destructive force of his tyranny, the violence of his unmitigated selfishness and wickedness, accompanied as they are by intellect, wit, and eloquence, have no organic counterpoise. On the one side we have only power and energy, on the other only submission and impotence. The principle of interaction, which is so important in life and in history, retires far into the background; not till the fifth act is the tyrant opposed by a real and worthy adversary in the person of Richmond. Accordingly, the drama is wanting in drastic animation; the action (that which is actually done or which happens) proceeds but slowly compared with others of Shakspeare's plays, and what does happen suffers from an internal uniformity; it is ever but the consequence of the same oppressive tyranny, ever the same victory of the same power, by the same means.*

However, on the one hand, it must be remembered the nature of tyranny is outward peace, *i. e.*, rigidity and uniformity, the unnatural accumulation of all the weight

* In spite of Oechelhäuser's counter-observations, I must maintain this objection against the economy of the drama, although it is perfectly accounted for by the nature of the subject, and therefore loses in weight. Oechelhäuser (*l. c.*) has only proved that we have a contrast to the prominent figure of Richard, not only in Margaret and the old Duchess of York, but also in the carefully finished and excellently described characters of Queen Elizabeth, Buckingham and Stanley. I do not at all dispute this, in fact, perfectly agree with his exhaustive and ingenious discussions, especially on the character of Queen Elizabeth. But this is not the point in question; my objection to the want of an appropriate counterpoise to Richard, does not refer to the *characters* contrasted to him or to their delineation and significance, but to the *action* and its course. In this respect it can hardly be denied that all of the above-named persons (except Stanley, who, in the battle at the end of the play, goes over to Richmond's side, neither *act*, nor are *capable* of accomplishing anything against Richard, because they are not his equals in intellect, power of will, or energy, nor have they the necessary means of opposing him.

in the one scale, want of organic interaction and co-operation in the several parts, and hence the highest stage of decay in the organism of the state; and this was necessarily the consequence of a period like that of the reign of Henry VI. It is the description of the nature of *tyranny* that forms the historical significance of the whole drama, and here, as everywhere, the truly *historical* conception coincides with the truly *poetical* character of the representation. Therefore, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that the poet, by this very artistic defect, has contrived to render the meaning of the whole the more vivid, the clearer and the more forcible. Tyranny is the historico-political phenomenon of selfishness in its worst form, *i.e.* reckless love of dominion which tramples upon all rights and all laws, as well as upon all human ties; hence it is evil in its highest possible consummation. The individual *I* arrogates to itself the full dominion over all the powers of the mind, over all worldly possessions, and over the weal and woe in the life of all others; the individual man, with his finite power, presumes not only to direct a whole nation and its fate, but to be its fate himself. This is the meaning of Richard's words, 'I am myself alone,' the motto of the perfect tyrant, and it at the same time expresses his full, clear consciousness of his own nature. Richard is quite aware that he is a tyrant, he *knows* it, and *wills* it; this was required by Shakspeare's view of life, which is far removed from the thought that man is a *mere* instrument in the hand of a higher power. This is the reason and significance of the reflections which Richard is perpetually making upon himself and his own nature, and which have been censured as unnatural. But such soliloquies essentially belong to the character of a tyrant, according to the conception of modern times; Richard soliloquises in order to gain a clear insight into his own nature, his vocation, his aims, plans and actions, for, in his weird loneliness, he cannot hold communion with others.

In fact, the character of Richard and its development is, so to say, but the exposition of the nature of tyranny; we have a direct representation of its general character in a particular and individual form. The drama, accord-

ingly, opens with Richard announcing his intention to acquire supreme power, and with the account of the means he employs, and the paths he pursues in order to attain his object. But this endeavour does not proceed only from Richard's ambition and love of dominion, but likewise from his demoniacal desire to give forcible evidence of his *power* over mankind and circumstances, it proceeds from the demoniacal *pleasure* he finds in proving it. The endeavour arose in the dark depths of the fearful gulf by which he feels himself separated from, and at enmity with all the rest of humanity, owing to his in-born deformity, his in-born disposition and powers, wants and desires, in short, owing to his very nature which he regards as unalterable. And the more readily he succeeds in carrying out his intentions, the broader the gulf becomes, because the greater becomes his contempt for humanity. This contempt and this pleasure explains the peculiar irony, the diabolical humour with which Richard suns himself in his own actions, and which seasons his sarcastic remarks on life and mankind. He attains his object, partly because the historical circumstances themselves are hurrying towards tyranny, partly because he pursues it with penetrating shrewdness, with the craftiest hypocrisy and deception, and with an energy as great as it is reckless, which heaps crime upon crime and is undeterred by any consequences. The impassable gulf between him and the rest of humanity, as it were, makes him an absolute exception, for every one commits crimes only among and upon his equals. Richard's chief means in accomplishing his purpose, is his in-born talent for dissembling, his skill in concealing his endeavours and intentions beneath the mask of an honest, frank, conscientious and God-fearing man, who is indeed not always master of his emotions and passions, yet who always repents their outbursts and consequences. This skill in dissembling, together with its sister-talent sophistry, he makes use of in the most masterly fashion in order to justify himself, and falsely to deceive himself,—in this he is again the type of a true tyrant and consummate villain. For the root of all evil lies in deceiving the sophistic reason, which perverts

truth, because the will refuses to see it; moreover, the fundamental form of all evil is lying and hypocrisy, because evil cannot maintain itself except by the semblance and mask of what is good.

But the attainment of the object at which Richard had aimed, proves the turning-point in his fortunes; for tyranny cannot of course *maintain* anything, inasmuch as it is itself essentially destruction and annihilation, and accordingly cannot even maintain its own existence. When it has become realised, that is, when it has destroyed the organism of the state, it then cannot do otherwise than destroy itself, inasmuch as it has nothing else to destroy. This process of self-destruction which is represented (in a personal form) in the further development of Richard's character, constitutes the further advance of the dramatic action. Richard's energy, his skill in dissembling, his self-control, and his self-confidence diminish in the same degree as circumstances become louder in their demands upon his activity to maintain the sovereignty which had been acquired by bloodshed. *This* demand he feels to be beyond his power, and for the first time he is conscious of a feeling of weakness and helplessness, which feeling awakens his conscience. But the destroying process of his existence has herein reached a height where it can no longer be checked. Richard is Richard only *without* a conscience; upon its awakening he is no longer himself, he has already perished. The death which, in his pangs of conscience he seeks and finds in the tumult of his victorious enemies, is but the outward sign of his already complete self-destruction.

Now tyranny can arise only from or in the time of civil war, which, although it may not be apparent in an outward form, is always present inwardly, that is, in the general state of moral corruption; it cannot arise except as a result of the total decay of social and political life. It is itself merely the expression of the highest stage of disorganisation, and naturally increases when the strength of evil is broken, when the force of the desires and passions has so far exhausted the mind that it can no longer assert its own will, when the state and the people have become so helpless that they can no longer guide themselves. Tyranny

then springs up either in order to lead to the complete annihilation of political independence (as was the case with the imperial power of Rome), or, as in the present instance where it forms a point of transition, in order to prepare a new historical era by the entire removal of the organic disturbance of history, by the punishment and destruction of all its promoters, and by correcting the rest. To carry out a punishment of this kind is, as it were, the task, as well as the historical and poetical significance, of tyranny; historically because it expresses the co-operation of the moral necessity with the human freedom of will, poetically because, when represented in this manner, it gives a direct view of the true significance of history.

All the other characters of the play are selected in accordance with this view: Margaret, the fury of the horrible *past* upon which the whole rests, the terrible prophetess whose predictions are so many curses, because the past hangs like a curse on the heads of all; by her side we have the Duchess of York, the mother of three royal brothers—she, it is true, stands nearer to the present, but like Margaret is destined only to witness the downfall of her guilty house, and to interfere in the action only in so far as, when hurling the terrible, overwhelming curse upon her own son, she calls forth the first stirrings of conscience in Richard's soul, and is thus the cause of his ruin; Edward IV., Clarence and Lady Anne are the representatives of the gloomy *present*—they, although not exactly eminent in virtue, are nevertheless too good for the corrupt state of the times, and are drawn into the great punishment because they arrogated to themselves a position to which they were not called; lastly, the children of Edward and of Clarence are the representatives of a better *future*, which, however, cannot be realised by them, inasmuch as they are the off-shoots of a race burdened with the curse of the past. Hence they too perish by the hands of him who is carrying out the judgment of God; for the sins of the fathers bring destruction upon the children, the former perish because of the past, the latter because the future—which lives on in the past—refuses to let them live. The secondary characters, Rivers, Grey,

Vaughan, Hastings, and Buckingham are punished for the rashness with which they pressed towards the great catastrophe; Buckingham, also on account of his own transgressions.

The race of Henry IV. is ultimately quite rooted out; of the house of York, with the exception of the childless Richard,* there survives but one daughter of Edward IV., to connect the old with the new era. This had to be. The deliverer and founder of the new era had necessarily to be of a different blood; yet his title had, at the same time, in some measure to mediate between the past and the future. Such was the case with Henry, duke of Richmond, afterwards Henry VII., and the husband of Elizabeth, the above-named daughter of Edward IV. of the House of Lancaster (Gaunt), it is true, but not a descendant of Henry IV. He appears a gentle, pious youth, not a distinguished or eminent person. For the age is so demoralised that it not only cannot offer any resistance to the tyrant Richard, but is also unable to provide a deliverer from within itself. Very justly, therefore, Henry considers himself 'God's captain,' and does not centre his hope in himself, in the prevailing circumstances or in the strength of his army; it is simply his consciousness that it is the will of God that gives him the energy he exhibits in the great enterprise. He is the man whom God sent, whom the age required, and who alone was entitled to act; the invisible hand, which ever guides the course of history, maintains and protects him. How beautifully the poet has contrived to express this is shown in that scene of the fifth act, so frequently censured, in which appear the ghosts of those members of the royal family whom Richard had murdered. Such spectral apparitions certainly do not properly belong to an historical play; history knows nothing of them. The poet, however, conceives them but as forms which rise up vividly before the dreamer's imagination, and which in the one case proceed from an evil conscience, in the other from a pure conscience; the spectral apparitions

* His son, whom Shakspeare does not mention, died one year before him.

are to Richard merely the threatening admonishers called forth by the disturbed state of his mind, and his troubled conscience; to Richmond they are merely the encouraging messengers of victory presented to his mind's eye by his pure, trusting heart and his consciousness of right. Yet these figures do not appear only to the dreamers, they are also seen by the spectators; hence they are no mere visionary forms, but have their full poetic reality; to have introduced them as mere dreams would not have excused the poet. Shakspeare therefore must have had some other special object for inventing this scene. And his object is sufficiently obvious if only it be looked at properly. For the dramatist does not describe history simply with the accuracy of a portrait painter, he also *invents* it, and this invention is the inner nucleus of history—the ideal nature of events not actually or *directly* manifested—because it coincides with the first and invisible motives of the course of history. On this account the drama must exhibit externally what, in history, exists only internally and is hidden beneath the veil of its often unimportant consequences and effects. This seeming violation of history in the poet proves itself an excellence, as the best—because the simplest—means for giving a clear elucidation of the ideal truth of his representation, the substance of which, here as everywhere in Shakspeare, is a view of history from the aspect of its inner connection with that higher, *ethical* guidance of events spoken of above—a view moreover which Shakspeare expresses emphatically in the words uttered by Henry, in prayer, shortly before the appearance of the spirits (v. 3):

“O Thou! whose captain I account myself,
Look on my forces with a gracious eye;
Put in their hands thy bruising irons of wrath,
That they may crush down with a heavy fall
The usurping helmets of our adversaries!
Make us thy ministers of chastisement,
That we may praise Thee in thy victory!
To Thee I do commend my watchful soul,
Ere I let fall the windows of mine eyes;
Sleeping, and waking, O defend me still!”

That his prayer is heard is then confirmed by the ghost of Buckingham, whose speech concludes with the words :

“ God and good angels fight on Richmond’s side ;
And Richard falls in height of all his pride.”

This forms the close not only of the tragedy bearing the name of ‘ Richard III.,’ but of the whole great tragedy which begins with ‘ Richard II.,’ and ends with the Third of that name.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE CONNECTION OF THE EIGHT ENGLISH HISTORIES, THEIR
DEVIATIONS FROM HISTORY, ETC.

THE eight historical plays which embrace one of the most important centuries of English history, when taken collectively, form such a full, grand, and artistic picture, that I know of nothing in the whole domain of dramatic poetry that can be compared to it.

In the preceding discussion I have endeavoured to point out the internal connection, the living, organic process of development which was determined by the first stages, and which, without injuring their independent existence, unites these eight plays into one complete whole. But Shakspeare, with extraordinary skill, has also contrived externally to connect each independent whole with the other, and thus again succeeded in forming all the several parts into one greater whole. In 'Richard II.,' for instance, we hear Henry inquiring about his eldest son, and speaking of his irregular life; this, it is true, is done at the expense of chronological truth, a proceeding with which the earlier English critics found great fault. Further, at the close of 'Richard II.' we hear of a conspiracy against Henry; and the latter, after hearing of Richard's death, makes a vow to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre in expiation of his crime, and to quieten his conscience. These three points again are directly connected with the First Part of 'Henry IV.;' for the representation of the disturbances and revolts against Henry, the description of his state of mind, compared with that of the life and character of his son, form the actual substance of both Parts. The close of the Second Part (Prince Henry's conversion and elevation to the throne) is, at the same time, the beginning of the following drama, the subject of which is centred in the history of the reign

of Henry V. The intervening years between the first apparent termination of the great war and the death of Henry V. had to be omitted because, being without outward, historical action, they were not adapted for dramatic treatment. On this account the poet, in a chorus, refers to the dramas describing the reign of Henry IV.: he there says:

“ Henry the sixth, in infant bands crown’d king
Of France and England, did this king succeed ;
Whose state so many had the managing
That they lost France, and made his England bleed.”

The coffin of Henry V., which adorns the background of the stage in the introductory scenes of the following trilogy, as well as the lamentations of the assembled dignitaries of the state over the deceased hero, the remembrance of his heroic deeds and the unhappy tidings from France, give us a vivid representation of the subject of the preceding drama as well as of the changed condition of affairs.

It is scarcely necessary to remind the intelligent reader that the three parts of ‘Henry VI.’ stand in the closest relation to one another: I shall therefore only draw attention to the fact that the First Part ends with the successful intrigues of Suffolk in persuading the King to consent to a marriage with Margaret of Anjou, that the Second Part opens with the arrival of the young queen in England, and closes with the battle of St. Alban’s, to which the first scene of the Third Part—the deliberations of the victorious party after the battle—forms a direct continuation. I have already remarked that the poet brings the subsequent Richard III. prominently forward in the second half of the Third Part, and that this is obviously done with the intention of introducing the following drama. The last link of the great whole then takes up the thread of history exactly where it had been dropped in the preceding play, silently setting aside the reign of Edward IV., which was dramatically unrepresentable. In precisely the same manner as was done in the first parts of ‘Henry VI.’, we have, in the first two scenes of ‘Richard III.’, the past and future fused together by

the representation of the imprisonment of Clarence. and by the funeral procession of Henry VI., with the Lady Anne as mourner; the preceding drama decidedly affects the following one, and conversely, the latter was prepared in the former. In short, we could scarcely have a more evident proof that the poet's intention was to represent history in one continuous flow, from Richard II. down to Henry VIII.

I even go so far as to think that Shakspeare's deviations from actual history, more especially those in regard to chronology, which he might otherwise have avoided,* were made with a view of giving a vivid representation of both the inner and the outer connection of the greater whole, and of the ideal character, the ethical significance of the events in the several parts. These deviations refer of course only to such points in which he has differed from the chronicles and popular histories of his day, to the exclusion of all such corrections as have been gained by modern investigations. It was only *such* sources that Shakspeare *wished* to and *could* follow, owing to the character of dramatic poetry, which is necessarily popular; he could not have adopted the results of learned historiography even though—what was not generally the case—these had existed at his time. That Shakspeare was perfectly conscious of this himself, is evident from the earlier titles of some of his historical plays; for instance, that of 'Henry V.' in the quarto of 1608, *The Chronicled History of Henry, etc.*, for which reason R. Brome, in one of his comedies,† not unjustly speaks in a very general way of Shakspeare's chronicled histories. Accordingly, the poet cannot be reproached for having in 'Henry VI.' (in the dispute about the ransom of the Earl of March, Glendower's prisoner) confounded the two earls Edmund of March with one another, and for making Mordake a son of Archibald, Earl of Douglas; for the confusion exists in Holinshed's Chronicle, and the poet was led into the error by a misprint in the same chronicle. For the same

* Gervinus has adopted this thought from the second edition of my work, and worked it out in his own way, more especially in regard to *Henry VI.*

† *The Antipodes* (1608).

reason, it cannot be considered a violation of historical truth when, in 'Richard II.,' Shakspeare lays the death of the dethroned king to the account of Henry IV., for in the poet's day this was the general opinion supported by the statements in the chronicles, although recent investigations may have come to a different conclusion. Nevertheless it remains true that Richard's death was a consequence of Bolingbroke's rebellion and of his own dethronement. The same applies to some other facts which I shall pass over, as the dramatist must be left entirely free as regards all accidental and secondary circumstances in history. Hence he scarcely deserves to be found fault with even though he should occasionally contradict himself in some such points, as, for instance, when in 'Henry VI.' he allows Clifford to fall by the hand of the Duke of York and yet afterwards speaks of him as having fallen with others by the sword of common soldiers, or again when, in 'Richard III.' the same Sir John Grey whom Henry VI. erroneously mentions among the adherents of the House of York, is accounted one of the Lancastrian party.

On the other hand, it is a violation of historical truth, even though but a slight one, that Henry Percy, who was not much younger than Henry IV., is, by Shakspeare, made of the same age as Prince Henry, and defeated and killed by him. The Chronicles know nothing about this heroic deed: according to them Percy fell by an unknown hand; and yet the unknown hand of historical tradition *might* have been that of the Prince, who was afterwards Henry V. The drama *required* that Percy should fall by the hand of Henry, because the poet had here to give an intimation of the heroic career which was subsequently to be depicted, and also to give the chief character of the play its proper relation to the whole, and thus to place its meaning and significance in a clear light. The inaccuracies in 'Henry VI.' and in 'Richard III.' are more important.*

* Courtenay, Gervinus, Kressig, and the early English critics, here again accuse the poet of several deviations from the Chronicles, of which he is not guilty, and which are founded only upon their own superficial study of his historical authorities. Of this I have already given an example in the love affair between Suffolk and Queen Margaret, which Oechelhäuser (*l. c.*) has illustrated more fully by some other instances.

It is true that they are partly intentional deviations from history,* and accordingly prove what indeed is scarcely in need of proof, that the *young*, untutored Shakspeare, who had no adequate models, did not yet possess the power of artistically solving the difficult task which he had undertaken of dramatising the excessive wealth and scattered state of the subject-matter presented by the reign of Henry VI. (embracing as it did intrigues the threads of which were hidden, and incidents that were ever thwarting one another) without injuring the historical truth. Most of the deviations attributed to the poet are, however, unjust, for they are deviations only from chronology, or were necessary for giving artistic finish to the subject-matter, or, again, were made only because the poet, for the sake of the higher historical truth, wished and was obliged to connect the separate dramas into one great, cyclic whole. I pass over the circumstance that Edmund Mortimer, earl of March, the rightful heir to the English crown, was not—as Shakspeare represents, and as Hall and Holinshed report—kept for many years in prison, but that he stood in favour with Henry IV. and Henry V. For even though Shakspeare may have known Hardyng's history, we could not possibly expect that he should have made a careful investigation as to which account was erroneous. He justly followed that historian of whose report he could make poetical use; and in the present case he absolutely required a proof in confirmation of Richard Plantagenet's (afterwards Duke of York) claim to the English throne; lastly, the poet was also obliged to re-awaken the remembrance of the unjust dethronement of Richard II. by Henry IV., which was the original disturbance of the course of history. This is why, as I have

* Among these—with Gervinus—I reckon the triple reproach of cowardice which is cast upon Falstolfe, the retaking of Orleans by Talbot, the attack upon Rouen, and Margaret's being made a prisoner by Suffolk. These incidents, which Shakspeare's authorities do not mention, are pure inventions of the poet, and, together with the description of the war which throughout represents the English in so favourable a light, may probably be accounted for by his youthful and extravagant patriotism, and also by the spirit of violent hatred against France which affected all minds in England at the time (1590).

already observed, the conversation between Edmund and Richard is indispensable.

The most flagrant offences against chronology are: that the peace between Philip of Burgundy and Charles VII. was not concluded till 1435, hence that Joan of Arc (who was burnt in 1431) could not have taken any part in it; that Talbot's death did not occur before, but eight years after the marriage of Henry VI. with Margaret of Anjou, and that, conversely, the punishment and banishment of the Duchess Eleanor of Gloster took place three years before Margaret's arrival in England, so that the former could not possibly have been insulted by the latter. Yet these very anachronisms do not really disturb the truth of history; and they appear justified in so far as Shakspeare required a definite centre for the war represented in the First Part of 'Henry VI.,' which centre was after all furnished historically * by the life and death of Talbot; moreover, the manifold changes of the war could not possibly have been dragged through several dramas. For the same reason, that is, for the sake of the artistic arrangement of the whole, the poet could not break the connection between the principal events of the internal history of England, and therefore was obliged to introduce Margaret's arrival and Eleanor's punishment in the same play. The scene in which the Queen boxes the ears of the Duchess throws great light upon the important character of Queen Margaret, her arrogance and love of dominion, her violence and inconsiderate harshness, and is also the motive of the subsequent behaviour of the Duchess, so that even this poetical licence may well be excused. Lastly, the dramatic economy required a centre and a leader for the royal or Lancastrian party—which indeed was represented by Henry VI., but which he was utterly incapable to direct. On this account Shakspeare not only makes Margaret take the reins of government into her own

* In order to bring this centre more prominently forward, and to throw more glory upon the English popular hero, Shakspeare has also interwoven the story of the Countess of Auvergne, which the Chronicles have left unreported, but which popular tradition probably put into the poet's hands. At all events the story has quite the character of a traditional anecdote.

hands earlier than was historically the case, but also implicates her in the intrigues and conspiracy formed against the life of the Duke of Gloster.*

The greatest anachronism, however, unquestionably lies in the appearance of Richard (afterwards the Third), as early as the time of the battles of St. Albans, Wakefield, and Saxton. For towards 1455 Richard was only between two and three years of age, and therefore in 1460 and 1461 somewhere about nine years old. But this very point is the clearest proof of the poet's intention to place the chief incidents in 'Henry VI.' in direct connection with the following drama, the fifth act of the great tragedy. Without some such purpose it would be inexplicable why he introduced Richard in 'Henry VI.' at all. For it is, indeed, historically certain that young Edward, Henry's son, was murdered by Richard and his brother George (Clarence); and it is still the general belief that Henry VI. himself fell by Richard's dagger. But as regards the first case, Shakspeare might have simply required the person of Clarence, and in the second might, without being untrue to history, have also left Richard out of the question. At all events there was no necessity for making him take part in the earlier transactions of the war. If, on the other hand, we maintain it to have been the poet's clearly expressed intention to form the different dramas into one great whole, then in 'Henry VI.' he certainly was

* When Gervinus not only acquits the Queen of this crime, but even maintains that it has not been historically proved that Gloster was murdered by Suffolk and the Bishop of Winchester, he is right, in so far as Holinshed clearly accuses Cardinal Winchester of all kinds of secret plots against the noble Duke Humphrey, which in the end prove his death. Holinshed further says: 'The Queen, persuaded by these means, first of all excluded the duke of Gloucester from all rule and governance, not prohibiting such as she knew to be his mortal foes to invent and imagine causes and griefs against him and his, insomuch that by his procurement, diverse noblemen conspired against him. Of which diverse writers affirm the Marquis of Suffolk, and the Duke of Buckingham to be the chief, not unprocured by the Cardinal of Winchester and the Archbishop of York.' Again, after giving an account of Suffolk's death, he adds: 'This end had William de la Poole, Duke of Suffolk (as men judge by God's Providence), for that he had procured the death of that good duke of Gloucester, as before is partly touched.'

obliged gradually to unfold Richard's character, more especially to set forth his military courage and bravery, qualities which were a foil to his tyranny, and indispensable to him in his subsequent office as the man who was to carry out the divine judgment, but which did not manifest themselves at a later period, during the reign of Edward IV. Accordingly, the historical error becomes a poetical excellence.

I have already stated the reasons why Shakspeare, in 'Richard III.,' makes the murder of Clarence happen about the same time as the death of Henry VI., although it occurred almost eight years later; further, why he causes Clarence to be put to death without trial, principally at the instigation of Richard and at his direct inference, although the one statement is false, and the other, at least, not certain;* again, why he makes Richard's wooing the Lady Anne contemporaneous with Clarence's death, although in reality two years intervened; and why he allows Queen Margaret—who, we know, was kept a prisoner in the Tower till 1475, and then sent back to France—to go about at liberty and to take part in the events, even though she is wholly powerless. The person of Margaret was necessary in order to keep alive the remembrance of the past in the present. Clarence had to fall through Richard's intrigues because it was dramatically indispensable that Richard should be represented as the principal instrument of the general retribution which met the past in the present, that is, which connected the whole with its several parts, and conversely. Only in this way could the drama, bearing the name of 'Richard III.,' be linked to those preceding it, as the last act of the great tragedy. The long proceedings of a legal trial would, comparatively, have given too much prominence to Clarence's death. The whole affair had to be briefly dismissed in order not further to retard the progress of the action, which was slow enough in itself; the undramatic interval between the

* And yet Richard's participation in the murder of Clarence is by no means a free 'invention' of Shakspeare's, as Courtenay and others maintain. Holinshed mentions it as the express opinion of eminent persons, that Richard was the cause of Clarence's death, in order to pave the way for his own accession to the throne.—(Oechelhäuser, *l.c.*)

death of Henry VI. and Clarence's murder, as well as between the latter and the marriage of the Lady Anne, had to be wholly removed. For the same reason Shakspeare gives merely gentle intimations of the origin and course of the conspiracy which was being hatched against Richard, the leaders of which, according to Holinshed, were the Duchess of Richmond (the mother of Henry VI.) and the Bishop of Ely. In Shakspeare this conspiracy is represented only by the Queen Elizabeth and Lord Stanley, who, in reality, played but subordinate parts in the plot. This deviation seems justified by the fact, that according to Shakspeare's ethical as well as artistic intention, Richard's fall was to appear as the close of the great cyclic whole, and therefore not merely as the work of man, but more as the consequence of the higher divine guidance of history.

I have discussed the obvious internal and external unity of the eight dramas more fully, in order at the same time to expose the utterly uncritical procedure of most English critics. For although, from the preceding examination, it must be perfectly evident that all these well-connected, organically arranged parts of one great whole can only have been the work of *one* hand, it has nevertheless been supposed—by Theobald, Malone, Drake, and others down to the recent times—that the three parts of 'Henry VI.' were not originally Shakspeare's.* He is said to have had but a very small or no hand in the First Part, and to have only improved the Second and Third Parts, or rather to have only remodelled the two old plays, *The First Part of the Contention of the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster*, and *The true Tragedie of Richard, Duke of York*, and to have made use of these for

* Among the most eminent German critics it is only Gervinus and Kressig who have adopted the English opinion—which, however, is beginning to show strong symptoms of giving way even in England. However, Gervinus only repeats the (weak) arguments of the English scholars, without entering into a refutation of the (much stronger) arguments of their German opponents. Kressig, who here again merely follows Gervinus, only increases the weakness of the untenable position, inasmuch as he immensely exaggerates the—undeniable—defects and errors in the three parts of *Henry VI.* and finds fault with things that are met with in all Shakspeare's undoubtedly genuine plays; hence, in trying to prove too much, he proves nothing.

the Second and Third Parts of his 'Henry VI.' I shall here confine myself to the question, what could have induced Shakspeare, when writing his 'Henry V.'—that is, when already in the zenith of his celebrity as a poet—to place this, his undisputed and unquestionably genuine work, and his no less unquestionably genuine play of 'Richard III.,' into so close a connection with the production of a subordinate poet, nay, of his decided opponent, Greene—a connection so obvious that no one has ever yet ventured to question it? As long as this inconceivable and senseless proceeding on the part of the poet is not explained, the reasons adduced against the genuineness of 'Henry VI.' will prove of little avail. I shall reserve the examination and consideration of these points for my next Book, as they are inseparable from the question as to whether and how far the above-mentioned plays, *The First Part of the Contention*, &c., and *The True Tragedie of Richard, Duke of York*, were written by Shakspeare. To enter into this discussion here would lead us too far from our path into the thicket of critical details.

As regards the date of the three parts of 'Henry VI.' and 'Richard III.,' all critics are unanimous that the four dramas must have been written *before* the second great tetralogy of English history which commences with 'Richard II.' For it is evident that the eight dramas which form one great whole, are subdivided into two equal halves of four each. The *first* half closes with 'Henry V.' and shows us the elevation of the House of Lancaster to the English throne, the manner in which it managed to maintain the unlawful possession, and, finally, its highest prosperity in the fame of 'Henry V.' The second comprises the three parts of 'Henry VI.' and 'Richard III.,' and describes the fall of the Lancastrian party, the fruitless struggles of the Yorkists to uphold their claim, and the final reconciliation of history, under the sceptre of Henry VII. Shakspeare took up the *second* half first; for that 'Henry VI.,' in its first form, must have existed at the time when Greene wrote his 'Groatsworth of Wit,' *i.e.* as early as the end of 1591 or the beginning of 1592, is proved by the celebrated and often-quoted passage in this pamphlet where we have a line taken from

the third part of 'Henry VI.' (which also occurs in 'The Tragedie of Richard Duke of York'); this date is supported also by all internal evidence. 'Richard III.,' however, probably appeared only a few years after 'Henry VI.' The earliest quarto (printed by Val. Sims for Andrew Wise) belongs to the year 1597;* and as every piece was acted before it was printed—which is here expressly stated on the title-page—it must have been composed at least as early as 1596. But probably it was written as early as 1593, which supposition is I think supported by a certain abruptness in the transitions, and some cases of harshness in the delineation of the characters, but, in general, by the difference in the tone and spirit of those of Shakspeare's histories which were written in the succeeding years. This applies more especially to the scene of Richard's courtship of the Lady Anne—the widow of the Prince of Wales whom Richard had murdered—within view of the coffin of Henry VI. her father-in-law, who was likewise one of Richard's victims; this sudden courtship, for which there exist no nearer motives, and Anne's equally sudden consent, which is wanting in all womanliness, form, as I think, a scene of intolerable harshness, and offensive to all feeling of delicacy. In spite of the cleverness with which it is worked out, it can be accounted for only by a state of recklessness in the young poet, intoxicated by his delight in the first triumphs of his powerful dramatic compositions.† Again Clarence's

* Of the other quartos, the second appeared as early as 1598, the other four in 1602, 1605, 1612 and 1622; that of 1602 with the remark on the title-page, (which is repeated in the later ones) 'newly augmented,' etc. The sixth quarto was reprinted twice (1629 and 1634), even after the publication of the folio—a proof of the great popularity of this play as well.

† I willingly acknowledge, as Oechelhäuser—the ingenious advocate of the scene—thinks, that, when well represented on the stage, it does not make the offensive impression which is produced on simply reading it. This is certainly an excuse for Shakspeare, the dramatist, who wrote only for the stage, but is no excuse for Shakspeare the poet, who, as such, stands above the stage. A great actor can—through the pleasure *his* skill affords—conceal the worst and most unquestionable defects of a *dramatic* composition in such a manner that they are scarcely noticed. But every dramatic work of art, as every individual scene, is not fully justified unless it has the approval,

long, historically unauthenticated account of his dream, as well as his interview with his murderers (i. 4)—however powerful the scenes may be—are unmotived in an artistic respect, in so far as they occupy too much space and yet do not in the least contribute to the development either of the action, or of the character of Richard. The same may be said of the secondary features which, it is true, are historically correct, but wholly unimportant from a dramatic point of view; for instance, Richard's request to have some strawberries from the garden of the Bishop of Ely (iii. 4); the remarks made by the scrivener (iii. 6), &c. Further, it is quite unaccountable how the prudent, and self-possessed Richard, who is so well skilled in the art of dissembling, could be thoughtless enough so grossly to offend his favourite the Duke of Buckingham, a man as powerful as he was proud and vain, that it should be the latter who drives him into the camp of his enemies. If these defects betray the young poet, who was as yet but little skilled in handling historical subjects, and if, further, this is also indicated by the lamentations of the women (ii. 2, iv. 1)—which in character are purely lyric, reminding one of the style of the Italian pastorals—and by the equally undramatic accumulation of curses and maledictions to which Margaret gives utterance, still, on the other hand, the play, in its present form—even though subsequently augmented—cannot have been written earlier than 1593. For the poet's description of Richard's tyranny is pre-eminently distinguished by moderation and self-control, compared with his 'Titus Andronicus' and his 'Henry VI.,' notwithstanding that the subject might have induced him to use deeper and broader colours in depicting the terrible. Accordingly, the drama must be separated by at least an interval of some years from the first-fruits of the poet's tragic muse. Language and delineation of character also, are much more Shakspearian than in 'Henry VI.' Tieck was of the opinion that the drama was first written by Shakspeare as early as about 1590,

not merely of the eye of the excited spectator, who has no time for critical reflection, but also of the calm searching and weighing discrimination of the reader.

and that it was remodelled by him six years later. This hypothesis is probably founded upon the following entry in the Stationers' registers on the 19th of June, 1594: 'An enterlude, entitled the Tragedy of Richard the Third, wherein is shoven the deathe of Edward the Fourthe with the Smotheringe of the Twoo Princes in the Tower, with the lamentable end of Shore's wife, and the conjunction of the twoo Houses of Lancaster and York.' This piece, which Tieck very likely considered the first sketch of Shakspeare's play, has however nothing to do with our "Richard III." It is—as has been proved by Barron Field's* careful reprint of the old edition of 1594—an earlier work which in some respects resembles the later Moralities on historical subjects, and was probably written before 1586; but the subject has not even been made use of by Shakspeare. Still the old print does give us some assistance in determining the date of Shakspeare's 'Richard III.'; for it is probable that the appearance of the latter was the reason of the earlier piece being 'warmed up again,' and made known by being printed for circulation, in the hope that the interest awakened by Shakspeare's play might be transferred to the other. This supposition, also, would assign 'Richard III.' to about the year 1593. 'Richard III.' was followed, about 1595, by 'Richard II.' and, as I have already observed, the latter piece was succeeded, down to 1599, by the two parts of 'Henry VI.' and 'Henry V.'

* See *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third, to which is appended the Latin Play of Richardus Tertius*, etc., by B. Field. London: Pr. for the Shakespeare Soc. Compare also Collier's *Shakespeare*, v. 343 f.—Shakspeare doubtless did not know anything of the still older Latin play of *Richardus Tertius* by Dr. Legge, which existed in manuscript only, and has been reprinted by Field, p. 77 ff.

CHAPTER XII.

HENRY VIII.

IF we now turn to the conclusion, to the epilogue of the great dramatic cycle from English history, we shall find ourselves upon the same historical ground, it is true, but transferred across a period of about three decades, and entering upon an entirely new and essentially different period.

The prayer of Henry VII. for peace—in the last act of ‘Richard III.’—was answered. His long reign may be said to have healed the deep wounds which the Civil Wars and Richard’s tyranny had inflicted upon the country. This, together with the fact that his reign also became to England a point of transition to the new political relations of Europe—which had become essentially changed since the sixteenth century—constitutes its historical significance. The reign of Henry VII., however, was not suited for dramatic representation because its very character was devoid of dramatic action. Its spirit and effect, accordingly, could be intimated only episodically, as is done at the close of ‘Richard III.’ Hence from an historical point of view the poet appears wholly justified in not having attached the last link of his dramatic cycle to the reign of Henry VII., and in having closed with the history and principal events of that of Henry VIII. This reign is the true *end*, because it is, at the same time, the *beginning* of a new historical period.

The monarchical principle had gained considerably in strength, in consequence of the Civil Wars and of the administration of Henry VII., and was now approaching its culminating point. The nobles, the clergy, and the people have become accustomed to obey; the king’s will is now almost unlimited. This the poet shows us in the fate of Buckingham, and also in some important scenes

(for instance, in act v. 2, 3), which for this very reason are indispensable. The increase of the royal power manifests itself outwardly in excessive splendour and luxury, which the higher nobility are induced to emulate. Their old tendency to maintain an independent position, politically opposed to that of the sovereign, had changed into the endeavour to be outwardly worthy of standing by his side, and in rivalling him in wealth and magnificence. Accordingly, in the first introductory scenes, we have a graphic description of the change in the character of the age. The church, after having attained the object which she so determinately expressed and vigorously pursued in the reign of King John, was now reaping the fruits of her perverse endeavours. Her internal, spiritual influence was broken—she could no longer carry out her pretensions openly, and could only hope to establish them by secret and circuitous paths, by intrigues, by double dealings and double speakings, in fact the royal power has eclipsed the ecclesiastical. The truth of this is most strikingly illustrated in the relation in which Cardinal Wolsey stands to the King and to the state. In other words the Middle Ages, with their knightly combats, their impetuous energy and the secluded, sharply defined form of all their social spheres, were fast approaching their extinction; life had become more inward, more intellectual. In the theological disputations about Henry's divorce, and in the reference to the time in which 'God shall be truly known,' we at all events have an intimation of the great religious revolution which was to establish the right of the free, unchecked development of the mind, by gradually dissolving the petrified mental culture of the Middle Ages which had become an empty form owing to the tyranny of the church. Hence, in this case again, in his representation of the general state of things, in his description of the character of the age, and in his conception of the peculiar tendencies and interests, as well as of the principal events in question, Shakspeare has remained absolutely faithful to history, and has shown his usual skill in penetrating to its very core.

But does he show us this core in the form which it assumes in history? In spite of the long defence of this

point by Gervinus, I feel I must abide by my *say*. It may not have been Shakspeare's intention to give his great cycle of English histories a fitting conclusion; he may, as Gervinus* thinks, 'have meant his poem to be a monument to the House of Tudor and to its great Queen Elizabeth, inasmuch as it was under their rule that England first enjoyed the tranquillity which gave scope for mental culture, and Elizabeth's reign which brought about all that which first encouraged and developed Shakspeare's art and which established his celebrity.' It may only have been to mark the contrast between the Tudor dynasty and the houses of York and Lancaster, that Shakspeare placed Cranmer's prophetic speech at the close of 'Henry VIII.' as a parallel to that at the end of 'Richard III.' He may, accordingly, have given decided prominence to the fall of Buckingham 'as the last representative of the decaying nobility whom Henry VII. had systematically kept in check,' simply in order to 'recall the proceedings during the supremacy of the houses of York and Lancaster;' and, on the other hand, may have made Wolsey's fall the centre of the action and of the dramatic interest because his endeavours, had they attained their object, 'would have newly established the papal throne (which, in fact, was his reason for plotting the ruin of Queen Katherine) and have spread Roman Catholicism in England.' Lastly, it may have been for the same reason—even though not on account of 'merit' as opposed to 'precedence of birth,' of which history tells us nothing and of which we also hear nothing in the drama—that the poet gives prominence to the rise of persons of low birth, to Henry's condescending manner towards those inferior to him in rank, and to his (in reality, despotic) harshness towards those of high birth—who boasted of their descent and thwarted his desires.

But if these were Shakspeare's intentions, this very glorification of the House of Tudor has led him to commit offences against historical truth in a way that he should

* The remarks of Dr. Ulrici on the following points refer to opinions expressed by Gervinus in the *first* edition of his work on Shakspeare; in his subsequent editions Gervinus altered his views.—[TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

not have done, because they are so many offences against poetical beauty and the laws of dramatic art. Shakspeare has, it is true, not spared Henry's character: he appears everywhere as the obstinate, capricious, selfish and heartless man that he was—a slave to his favourites and to his passions. That Shakspeare has not *expressly* described him as such, that he has rather characterised him tacitly through his own actions, and no doubt sedulously pushed his good points into the foreground, could not—without injustice—have been expected otherwise from a national poet who wrote in the reign of Henry's daughter, the universally honoured Elizabeth. Further, that he does not describe Anne Boleyn exactly as she was—she who, indeed, at first rejected Henry's advances, but afterwards lived with him in adultery for three years—is also excusable, seeing that she was Elizabeth's mother, and her doings had not in Shakspeare's time been fully disclosed, at all events they were not publicly narrated in the Chronicles and popular histories:

Some inaccuracies may be left out of consideration; for instance, that the opinions expressed by the most eminent theologians in regard to Henry's divorce were not in his favour, and that Thomas Cranmer was not quite the noble, amiable Christian character he is here represented. These are secondary circumstances which the poet was free to dispose of as he pleased. But one point, where he certainly is open to censure, is, that he has not given us a *full* and *complete* account of the lives of Henry and Anne, but simply a portion of their history; the representation therefore becomes untrue from an *ideal* point of view as well. Not only does this offend the justice which proceeds from human thought, but it likewise offends poetical justice. Moreover, it is opposed to the true and actual justice of history when a man like Henry—the slave to his selfish caprice, lusts and passions, the play-ball in the hands of such a favourite as the ambitious, revengeful, intriguing Wolsey—a man who condemns the Duke of Buckingham to death without cause or justice, and who for his own low, sensual desires repudiates his amiable, pious, and most noble consort, whose only fault is a pardonable pride

in her true majesty—when, I repeat, such a man is rewarded for his heavy transgressions with the hand of the woman he loves and by the birth of a fortunate child; and again, when we see Anne Boleyn—who even in the drama seems burdened with a grievous sin, inasmuch as she forces herself into the place belonging to the unjustly banished Queen—leave the stage simply as the happy, extolled mother of such a child, and in the full enjoyment of her unlawful possession. This is *not* the course taken by *history*. We know, and it was always well known, that Henry died while still in the prime of life and after much suffering, in consequence of his excessive dissipations—a wreck in body as well as in mind; we know, and it can never have been a secret, that Anne, after a short period of happiness, and not altogether unjustly, ended her frivolous life in prison, into which she was thrown at her own husband's command.

Such violations of the truth of history committed by poetry are necessarily avenged in the poetry itself. Hence, the drama of 'Henry VIII.' is also poetically untrue, devoid of real life, defective in symmetry and composition, because wanting in internal, organic construction, *i.e.* in *ethical vitality*. It is not a complete whole, but a showy piece of patchwork, and consequently devoid of true mind, a mere apparent reality, because the substance of the representation is wanting in every ethical motive, and hence the body has no living soul to form and to arrange it organically. Where the conclusion—as in the present case—stands in such sharp contradiction with the beginning and the middle of the play, there cannot exist a living whole, for such a whole is merely the internal unity of *all* the various parts, and where this internal unity is wanting (which unity takes the outward form of an harmonious arrangement of the parts, delineation and colouring, and thus charms both ear and eye), then the first requisite of all beauty cannot be fulfilled. Accordingly, however excellent, lifelike, and effective may be the delineation and the development of the characters of Wolsey, of Katherine, of Henry and of the other personages in their position in the play,

still we here again have a proof that characters and their delineation alone do not make a dramatic work of art. In whatever light the drama be viewed—whether, for instance, the life of the Cardinal or of Katherine be regarded as the centre of interest—it will be impossible, unless with violence and untruth, to discover that first requisite of art just spoken of, and without which it is no work of art.

The great defects of the play have also been recognised by Gervinus; he says, ‘In no other play has Shakspeare accumulated so much pageantry, ceremony, and pomp: we have banquets and masques, lawsuits, visions, and coronation and baptismal festivities.’ ‘No play,’ he adds, ‘seems so loosely united in its various parts, none so wholly wanting in a fundamental idea connecting the individual parts. We first have Buckingham’s wily intrigues against Wolsey, which turn against himself; in the second act, however, he has already retired from the scenes. Then in the Queen we discover a new enemy of the Cardinal’s, and his machinations which rob her of her throne and her husband. Thus far the actions and the figures are externally at least grouped round the person of the Cardinal, but he too disappears in the third act and is not seen again. The external threads of the continuation of the play—the marriage of Anne Boleyn—are only accidentally connected with Wolsey, and the enmity between Cranmer and Gardiner has nothing to do with him. The birth and baptism of Elizabeth, lastly, comes in like a new appendage, which certainly may be said to be a natural, but not an æsthetic result of what has gone before, and again seems only to be connected with the person of Cranmer by the christening gift which, as a godfather, he had to present to the infant. Accordingly, the external threads do not even unite these external actions among one another, and the internal threads seem to be even more opposed to every attempt that would seek to point out some connection. Although the threads cannot be brought to a unity of action, still externally they can be referred to the one figure of Henry VIII.; and yet, as regards mind, Henry seems to have the least claim of all to be regarded as

its soul. The plastic, lifelike, and animated course of the first three acts, which turn round three sharply delineated and interesting figures, evaporates in a strange manner; the two last acts proceed at first in motionless descriptions, but end in a regular kind of dramatic spiritualism. The fourth act contains nothing but the coronation of the new, and the death of the old Queen. The fifth takes up a short spell of action in the proceedings between Gardiner and Cranmer, but this soon breaks off; the main incident is Cranmer's prophetic speech about the infant.

Gervinus nevertheless maintains that the unity of the idea and of the dramatic action is to be found in the intentional exaltation of the House of Tudor, and then endeavours to justify the poet from this point of view. But when compared with the above-mentioned defects in the composition, Gervinus's justification, after all, only proves that such an intention, introduced from without and contradictory to the subject, is, in reality, incapable of giving the drama any unity, and, moreover, could be done only by violating the laws of dramatic art. Even Shakspeare, the greatest dramatic poet of all ages, had to experience that art cannot *flatter* with impunity, not even, as in the present case, where it had so good an excuse, in Elizabeth's character, and in her happy and glorious reign.*

* Charles A. Brown (*Shakspeare's Autobiographical Poems*, p. 184) indeed maintains that 'the dead cannot be flattered,' and there certainly can be no doubt that the play was not brought forward till after Elizabeth's death. But the flattery is not only addressed to her, but likewise to James I., and Brown is therefore obliged further to maintain with Malone, that the lines, '*nor shall this peace sleep with her,*' etc., were inserted by Ben Jonson and addressed to James at a time when Shakspeare was absent. Collier, it is true, contradicts this view, but, as I think, it cannot be denied that Brown has made his supposition appear rather probable by the instances he has adduced of similar lines, expressions, and images from Ben Jonson's masques. But even granted that these lines were written by B. Jonson, a supposition which however is not proved, the case itself is but little altered. Shakspeare did not flatter as a court servant, in order to purchase a friendly glance from his gracious sovereign, but as a poet, that is, not the individual, transient person, but his imperishable nature which continues to exist in history. Besides, the word itself has nothing to do with the question. Whether we say

It is possible, however, that Shakspeare had the intention of writing a *second* part to his 'Henry VIII.' and that outward circumstances prevented his doing so. If we might be allowed to think of a second play as a continuation in Shakspeare's usual style, then the present drama—even though not one of the great master's best works—would be relieved of the most important of its defects. Or may not Shakspeare have written the play *merely* for the Court, perhaps by express command? This thought struck me many years ago when reading the fifth act; and since my various attempts to ascertain the dates of Shakspeare's plays, and since I have become better acquainted with the data by which these are supported, this thought has come to seem almost a matter of certainty. In the first place all internal evidence, especially diction, versification, and characterisation favour the supposition that the piece belongs to the last period of Shakspeare's dramatic career. Malone and Drake assign it to the year 1601–2, for the sole reason that, according to their opinion, the compliments to Elizabeth could not have been written for James but for the Queen herself, inasmuch as James' feelings for his great predecessor were well-known to be anything but friendly. However, the flattery to Elizabeth is also interwoven with compliments to James, and these again with allusions to events belonging to the year 1606 or even 1612 (such as the founding of the colony of Virginia). The closing lines also, in which Elizabeth's character is depicted, distinctly prove that they were not written till after her death. Charles Knight and Delius justly remark that the compliments lavished upon Elizabeth would scarcely have reconciled her to the candid representation of her father's character, to the introduction of the relation in which he stood to her mother, and to the comparatively much greater prominence given to Queen Katherine, and would as little have allowed herself, through Cranmer, to be styled 'an aged princess,' or to have had her approaching death prophesied by him.

flattery, or the commemoration, or the exaltation of the House of Tudor, blind admiration, or the misrepresentation of the historical past for the sake of a brilliant future, the case remains the same.

Lastly, however—and this is the main point—the play which was performed on the day upon which, in 1613, the Globe theatre was burned down, is, in a letter written by a contemporary, Sir Henry Wotton, expressly called ‘a new play,’ and this play was Shakspeare’s ‘Henry VIII.,’ as is evident from Howe’s continuation of Stowe’s Chronicle, and from Sir Henry’s own words. These reasons also induced Chalmers to fix the date of ‘Henry VIII.’ as late as 1613, and subsequent English critics do not deny the weight of these reasons, but, because of the fact that James must necessarily have been offended by the great compliments paid to Elizabeth, they maintain that the piece cannot have been written during his reign, and that, accordingly, the complimentary lines to James must have been a subsequent addition; hence, that Sir Henry Wotton was deceived by the new title and the new epilogue which had been added. Wotton certainly does not speak of the play which was acted on the day of the fire as ‘Henry VIII.’ but under the name of ‘All is True.’ However, if the first objection raised by English critics—which we grant has some weight—were removed, the second one would likewise prove untenable; for in that case it would be more reasonable to suppose that the change of title was made at a later day, or that the play had been announced under a double title which Wotton did not give in full.*

* An occasional alteration of the usual title is known to have often occurred. Thus, as Malone has proved from the papers of Lord Harrington, the Lord Treasurer of King James, the *First Part of Henry IV.* was performed at Court in the year 1613, under the title of *Hotspur*; the *Second Part*, or perhaps *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, under the title of *Sir John Falstaff*; *Much Ado About Nothing*, under the title of *Benedick and Beatrice*; and *Julius Cæsar*, under the title of *Cæsar’s Tragedie*. Double titles also, as is well known, were not uncommon; in a letter of another contemporary (Th. Lorkin to Sir Th. Puckering) the play which was the cause of the fire at the Globe, is called *The Play of Henry VIII.*, hence it is very possible that the title *All is true* was but an addition, annexed perhaps in order definitely to distinguish Shakspeare’s drama from other and older pieces on the same subject, for instance, from Rowley’s *When You See Me, You Know Me*, or *The Famous Chronicle Historie of King Henry VIII.*, which was printed in 1605. (Re-published in 1874, by K. Elze: London, Williams and Norgate.)

Now Malone's first objection loses the best part of its weight, as soon as it is assumed that the play was first performed, perhaps even first written, or at least adapted and arranged, for the celebration of the marriage of the Count Palatine Frederick with the Princess Elizabeth (1613); and this supposition is not improbable in so far as it is a well-known fact that several of Shakspeare's plays were performed at Court during the visit of the Count. If this be assumed, it is clear that the compliments to Elizabeth must have been much less offensive to the king's ears when the feted princess was likewise called Elizabeth, and the eulogies might, therefore, be considered as so many covert compliments to the latter. This would also explain the pomp and the many pageants, the banquets, masques, and the coronation and baptismal festivities, etc., with which the play is so amply furnished, and which, at the same time, are a proof of its late origin, that is, at a period when Shakspeare's theatre had at its disposal a greater number of stage appurtenances than it had possessed for the representation of those of his historical plays which directly preceded it, for instance, his 'Henry IV.' (Part II.) and 'Henry V.' (as Delius justly observes).

My hypothesis acquires its chief weight, however, from a closer examination of the language and versification of 'Henry VIII.' It had even struck Roderick that the play contained almost twice as many lines with a redundant (final) syllable than any other of Shakspeare's dramas; that the cæsuras also were less uniform (freer, more irregular). And Delius observes—quite in accordance with my view—that 'Henry VIII.,' in common with the plays belonging to the latest period of Shakspeare's life (especially with 'Cymbeline' and 'The Winter's Tale') is found to possess the same obscurity and condensation of expression which is the result of the complicated structure of sentences and the ellipses, the same free, metrical principles which aim more at delineation of character than euphony, and that, more especially, the language of the chorus in 'The Winter's Tale' possesses a striking resemblance to the prologue and epilogue in 'Henry VIII.'*

* Gervinus contradicts himself when he recognises and expressly

Steevens explains the striking carelessness in the treatment of the verse and rhythm, by Shakspeare's having often inserted whole speeches from Holinshed 'with no more alteration than was necessary to the numbers of his verse.' The other alternative of the same critic, whose opinion is shared by Malone, that the reason of this carelessness might be explained by Ben Jonson having revised the play for a performance at Court, is a mere vague hypothesis, as Ben Jonson was not more careless as regards diction and versification than Shakspeare, and he, the Court poet *par excellence*, would hardly have ventured to be so careless. But no doubt traces of hurry might be pointed out, not only in the versification and language, but also in the composition, especially in the somewhat obscure development of the third and fourth acts, as well as in the arrangement of the scene eulogising Elizabeth and James—a fact to be accounted for only by external circumstances, inasmuch as it was Shakspeare's custom when writing his plays, not indeed to correct much, but subsequently to revise them.* We must therefore assume, either that Shakspeare was urged by a command from Court, or from his own company, to write a new play for the festivities in honour of the marriage of the princess Elizabeth, or at least urged in haste to finish a work which he had probably already commenced (the first three acts perhaps finished); he may possibly even have had to alter the original structure, more particularly the end, or it may be that he wrote the play in his latter years, and accordingly found no time to make a later revision, or to write the

mentions these peculiarities of the diction and versification, which he likewise considers as criteria of the last period of the poet's career, and yet assigns the play to the winter of 1603-4.

* These reasons make it impossible for me to agree with Collier (*Shakspeare's Works*, vol. v. 495 f.) in considering the *Enterlude of King Henry 8th*, which is entered in the Stationers' registers under Feb. 12th, 1605, as Shakspeare's *Henry VIII.*; Collier himself shows us, from Henslowe's Diary, that about that time there existed, besides Rowley's play *When You See Me, You Know Me*, one or two other dramas which treated of the same subject, more especially of the relation in which Wolsey and King Henry stood to one another. Why therefore must the *Enterlude* be considered absolutely to have been Shakspeare's *Henry VIII.*?

contemplated continuation in a second part. Any one of these suppositions would explain the above-mentioned defects, and to a great extent excuse most of them.*

Whatever may have been Shakspeare's reason for writing his 'Henry VIII.,' the play at all events furnishes another proof of the great contrast between the works belonging to the last period, of his dramatic career, and those of his earlier years, more especially his first productions. This contrast must be kept carefully in view, when any attempt is made to decide the question regarding the genuineness or spuriousness of the plays ascribed to him, which, if written by him, belong, at all events, to his youthful works. In so far 'Henry VIII.' forms a kind of transition to our next Book, in which this question will be more fully discussed.

* It affords me great pleasure and satisfaction to find that W. A. B. Hertzberg, in his scholarly and able introduction to *Henry VIII.* (vol. iv. of the *Schlegel-Tieck'sche Uebersetzung*, published for the German Shakespeare Society) not only agrees with my criticism of the play, but also with my conjecture that it must be regarded as a play, written for some express occasion as a theatrical after-celebration of the marriage of the princess Elizabeth. Hertzberg, in opposition to Gervinus and Delius, very justly maintains that the eulogy to James (act v. 5) is evidently a later interpolation, but that English critics have, from this fact, drawn the erroneous conclusion that the play was written during Elizabeth's reign. But, in fact, this circumstance only supports my conjecture, inasmuch as, from it, we may further infer, that probably the Master of the Revels, or the King himself, desired the company in his service to give a dramatic performance in honour of the princess's marriage, and accordingly, that Shakspeare, being demanded quickly to provide a suitable piece, wrote his *Henry VIII.*, but that after having presented it, and in consequence of the eulogies therein lavished upon Queen Elizabeth, he was induced to add a compliment to James.—Hertzberg, with his usual sagacity and his profound understanding of Shakspeare's historical dramas, also points out that the few and, generally speaking, unimportant chronological deviations which Shakspeare has made from Holinshed, were necessary, partly as regards the dramatic composition itself, partly for carrying out his intentions, and that not only do they not injure the historical truth, which alone required to be considered, but that they rather throw a clearer light upon it.

BOOK VII.

ON THE PLAYS ASCRIBED TO SHAKSPEARE, THE
GENUINENESS OF WHICH IS DOUBTFUL.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST PART OF THE CONTENTION, AND THE TRUE
TRAGEDIE OF RICHARD DUKE OF YORK.

IN addition to the thirty-six dramas already examined, which are included in the first folio edition of Shakspeare's works (1623), and are admitted into all the subsequent innumerable editions of Shakspeare's works—notwithstanding the doubt entertained by many English critics concerning the genuineness of 'Titus Andronicus' and the three parts of 'Henry VI.'—there is another series of plays published under Shakspeare's name, the majority of which are decidedly not genuine, and the remaining few at least of doubtful genuineness.

The earlier English critics, after Theobald, rejected them one and all, because, in their opinion, Shakspeare did not begin to write for the stage till 1593; that up to that time he had, at most, provided the works of other authors with additions, or corrected and remodelled them; and because the plays which possess the most claim to be considered genuine, must—if written by Shakspeare—have been written before 1593. In other words it was their opinion that the poet who wrote 'Venus and Adonis'—the poem which Shakspeare himself calls 'the first heir of his invention,' and dedicated to the Earl of Southampton in 1593—could not, at a later date have penned 'Titus

Andronicus' or the three parts of 'Henry VI.,' and still less other plays that are wholly unworthy of him. But according to the testimonies already adduced,* Shakspeare, by calling 'Venus and Adonis' the 'first heir of his invention,' cannot possibly have meant to say that it was the first production of his Muse in that kind of poetry, as well as in the dramatic species. According to the testimonies alluded to above, we are forced to assume that, as early as 1592 Shakspeare had not only made attempts, but had already won applause and fame in *all* the different forms of dramatic poetry (comedies, tragedies, and histories). The most eminent English critics and literary historians—Dyce, Collier, Halliwell, Knight, etc.—are now agreed on this point. The question, therefore, is no longer whether he wrote for the stage before 1592, but which and how many plays had he supplied to the stage up to that year?

As almost all the plays, the genuineness of which is doubtful, must—if written by Shakspeare—be reckoned among his *youthful* works, the standpoint maintained by most English critics in discussing the point, is obviously a wrong one, inasmuch as they take Shakspeare's later *master-pieces* as the standard for their judgment. It is clear that—if we wish to arrive at a result that will prove critically tenable—the plays, upon which the question chiefly turns can and ought to be compared only with such pieces as are well-known to be the poet's first and earliest productions. It is a universally recognised fact that the genius of every great master, in whatever domain of art he may have worked, undergoes a process of development, and that his first youthful attempts differ widely from his later masterpieces; of this we hardly need bring forward any proofs, as every page of the history of art bears witness to the fact. Compare, for example, Goethe's 'Mitschuldigen' with his 'Iphigenia,' or his 'Faust;' Schiller's 'Räuber' with his 'Wallenstein,' or his 'Tell;' Mozart's 'Bastien and Bastienne,' or his 'Mithridates,' with his 'Figaro' or his 'Don Juan;' Handel's Italian operas with his 'Messiah;' Rafaele's first paintings in the style of Perugino with his grand Roman

* See vol. i. p. 204 f.

works; if these were placed side by side without regard to their intermediate stages, we should not unfrequently feel ourselves tempted to ascribe them to entirely different authors. It is difficult to see why English critics, generally speaking, are inclined to overlook this often very striking difference in regard to Shakspeare's works, whereas German critics have hitherto brought it forward strongly, perhaps too strongly. It may be because German critics are less given implicitly to believe in authorities, and Malone was therefore no authority to them; it may also be because the leading German critics possessed a more extensive knowledge in regard to the various branches of art and the history of art. For the judgment of a man like A. W. Schlegel, who had at his command the literature of almost all civilised nations, is very different from that of a man whose knowledge is confined to Shakspeare and to English poetry.

'Titus Andronicus,' as we have already seen,* possesses not only the most irrefutable external proofs of its genuineness, but is now acknowledged by the first English critics to be genuine, and must have been brought upon the stage as early as 1589. Accordingly this tragedy of Shakspeare's, which is doubtless his earliest, must be taken into special consideration when deciding the question as to the doubtful tragedies. Of his comedies, those generally considered his earliest, as already observed, are 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona,' 'The Comedy of Errors,' and 'Love's Labours Lost' (perhaps also 'The Taming of the Shrew')—hence they must form our standard in judging of the doubtful comedies. If we may not appeal to three parts of 'Henry VI.,' as they are still rejected by most English critics, then, of the historical plays, 'Richard III.' has the first claim to consideration. But 'Richard III.' as already shown, cannot well have been written earlier than about 1593; therefore in deciding about the doubtful histories we are again referred more especially to 'Titus Andronicus.' Yet we shall after all have to draw 'Henry VI.' into the discussion, as its critical opponents all admit that Shakspeare had a more or less important share in the play. Moreover, criticism

* See vol. i. 515, ff.

must not adhere merely to the above-named pieces; for it is self-evident that, in the examination of the doubtful tragedies, not only has attention to be paid to the genuine comedies as well as to the histories, but that we must everywhere keep all Shakspeare's works in view whatever may be the particular piece under discussion.

I begin my critical review with the two historical plays mentioned in our last Book, which, in the opinion of English critics, Shakspeare is supposed to have remodelled in the second and third parts of 'Henry VI.' In the earliest quarto editions their full titles are:

1. The First Part of the Contention betwixt the two famous houses of Yorke and Lancaster, *with the death of the good Duke Humphrey, and the banishment and death of the Duke of Suffolke, and the tragicall end of the proud Cardinall of Winchester, with the notable Rebellion of Jacke Cade, and the Duke of Yorke's first claime unto the Crowne.* London: Printed by Thomas Creed, for Thomas Millington, etc. 1594.

2. The true Tragedie of Richard, Duke of Yorke, *and the death of the good King Henrie the Sixt, with the whole contention betweene the two houses Lancaster and Yorke, as it was sundrie times acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Pembroke his servants.* Printed at London by P. S. for Thomas Millington, etc. 1595.

They are the most important of the doubtful plays, in so far as the result of the inquiry about their origin includes the decision of the question as to Shakspeare's claim to and share in the trilogy of 'Henry VI.' For the sake of impartiality of judgment, I shall in the first place disregard the connection between them and 'Henry VI.,' and shall consider them by themselves as independent works, without regard to the (as we shall see) very probable hypothesis that they are but pirated, greatly corrupted copies of the two last parts of 'Henry VI.' taken down during the performance.

Recent English critics are no longer, as already intimated, quite of the same mind as their predecessors, inasmuch as they differ among one another both as to the value and as to the authorship of the two dramas.

W. G. Clark and W. A. Wright* say: 'we cannot agree with Malone on the one hand, that they contain nothing of Shakspeare's, nor with Mr. Knight on the other, that they are entirely his work; there are so many internal proofs of his having had a considerable share in their composition, that in accordance with our principle we have reprinted them in a smaller type.' This *juste milieu* between the contending parties at the same time marks the position which J. O. Halliwell† occupies in regard to the question, for, more than thirty years ago, he endeavoured to establish the view now entertained by Clark and Wright. J. P. Collier and A. Dyce, on the other hand, follow Malone's opinion, and differ from each other only as to who was the joint-author with Shakspeare of the two plays. Collier‡ supposes him to have been Robert Greene; Dyce,§ on the other hand, conjectures that the greater part, at least, came from Marlowe's pen.

It is evident, therefore, that the opinion of German critics has gained some ground, but the controversy is by no means settled. The careful consideration to which this matter has repeatedly been subjected is to be accounted for simply by the great importance involved in the decision of the question, not only as regards Shakspeare himself, but also as regards the history of dramatic poetry, and thus of the literature of his age. For if the two old plays are not Shakspeare's, if he cannot be considered to have any claim to them, then in the first place it follows that the last two parts of 'Henry VI.' likewise, are but to a very small extent his work, in reality the property of some other poet. This unquestionably follows from the fact that not only is the composition—act for act and scene for scene—precisely the same, but also, as Halliwell justly remarks, that more than half of the entire contents of the two old plays are met with in the 2nd and 3rd parts of 'Henry VI.' wholly unaltered, or with

* The editors of the *Cambridge Edition* of Shakspeare, vol. v. p. 12. Cambridge and London, 1863 ff.

† In his edition of the two plays, *The First Sketches of the Second and Third Parts of King Henry VI.* London: printed for the Sh. Soc., 1843, Preface, p. xxxv. ff.

‡ His edition of *Shakespeare*, i. p. 49.

§ His edition of *Marlowe's Works*, i. p. 60.

but very slight deviations. The first scene, for instance, which in both cases introduces the course of the action, consists in the second part of 'Henry VI.' of 254 lines; in 'The First of the Contention,' etc. it amounts only to 116; of these, however, several passages are printed as prose, which are evidently blank verse (but corrupted in the print), and which if printed as verse would make the number of lines 8 or 9 more. Of these 174 lines, only 34 differ from the corresponding lines in 'Henry VI.'; 140 are, for the most part, word for word the same. Accordingly, if Malone's view is correct, Shakspeare has merely added some 80 lines to this scene from the work of another author, and replaced about 34 by others of his own. The case is much the same with most of the other scenes of the play (except that a few appear almost wholly unaltered), and is even more unfavourable as regards 'The True Tragedie of Richard,' etc., of which almost the whole substance, at least all that is in any way important and significant, coincides more or less exactly with the third part of 'Henry VI.'* However, had there existed a poet who could have written the scenes of the old plays retained by Shakspeare, then this predecessor was so closely related to him in mind, that Shakspeare required but to follow his footsteps, and, accordingly, Shakspeare's position as regards the age in which he lived, his importance as regards the growth and development of the English drama, would have to be conceived in quite a different light from that in which they have hitherto been viewed. For however low an estimate may be formed of the two old plays, this much is certain and has never been disputed, that in those portions retained by Shakspeare there occur a number of passages which are more equal to the undoubtedly genuine productions of Shakspeare's genius than any other dramatic work of his day.

The most distinguished dramatists among Shakspeare's predecessors and younger associates, were Robert Greene and Christopher Marlowe. And they alone can be taken

* Truly this is a colossal piece of plagiarism, the inconceivable part of which is that Heminge and Condell could have had the face to admit it among Shakspeare's works!

into consideration in regard to the question as to what poet, besides Shakspeare, the two old plays belong. Collier, as already remarked, decides in favour of R. Greene, and Gervinus agrees with him. Dyce,* on the other hand, declares himself decidedly opposed to Greene, by maintaining that 'Greene, Lodge and Peele may each perhaps have had a hand in *The First Part of the Contention*, and in *The True Tragedie*, but their undisputed works show that they were quite incapable of rising to the vigour of conception and expression which characterise some scenes in those two dramas.' And, in fact, whoever has but cursorily glanced through Greene's dramas cannot well avoid coming to the conviction that he was simply incapable of writing a scene such as, for instance, the murder of King Henry in the '*True Tragedie*;' the thoughts, the diction, the spirit and the characterisation, in short, almost everything, differ so completely from Greene's style that perhaps it was only the external consideration of the celebrated passage in his '*Groatsworth of Wit*,' which accuses Shakspeare of plagiarism and first provoked the controversy, that may have misled Collier in his judgment and have induced him to regard Greene as the author of both plays. If, accordingly, Greene cannot have been the author, then Marlowe is the only one who could possibly have written them. To him, as already said, they have been ascribed by A. Dyce; and Dyce is an authority in the domain of criticism and literary history whose importance I perfectly acknowledge, and this alone has induced me to give a full statement of my contrary opinion.

I have already characterised Marlowe† more fully as the most eminent of Shakspeare's predecessors, as compared with Greene and his contemporaries. In grandeur, in power and boldness of spirit, in vigour and energy of will, in freedom of mind and independence of thought, he unquestionably stood next to Shakspeare. But his heart was devoid of all tenderness and sincerity of feeling; his soul was wholly wanting in that depth, calmness and warmth which alone can give rise to and develop the

* His edition of *Shakspeare*, vol. i. 54.

† Vol. i. p. 150 ff.

higher, ethical emotions, the religious and moral sentiments, that is, the feeling for truth and beauty; his nature inclined towards wild passionateness, towards unbridled capriciousness, which despised alike both moderation and law. In power of tragic pathos, therefore, he stands unrivalled among Shakspeare's predecessors, but the tragic element in him becomes perverted into what is fearful, revolting, and horrible. For, as I have already shown, his idea of tragedy is the annihilating struggle of mighty forces and impulses which have run from their usual course, the struggle of uncontrollable emotions and passions one against the other; and this idea found its support in Macchiavelli's view of life (which, according to Greene's testimony, Marlowe favoured), regarding all means as justifiable in order to acquire that unlimited power and dominion which offers the gratification of all lusts and desires. His characters are more profoundly conceived, more powerfully and sharply delineated than those in any of Shakspeare's other predecessors; in this respect, also, he stands next to Shakspeare. But, owing to the majority of his dramatic personages being mere emotion, mere passion, and in this respect transgressing all bounds the perpetual ferment and commotion do not permit of any fine delineation, of any progressive growth and development of the characters. Passion and lust so completely govern their actions that they are wholly wanting in all ethical emotions, and completely ignorant of the idea of duty. In not a single one of Marlowe's dramas do we find a character guided by truly moral motives; nowhere is there any question about the struggle between the moral nature of man with his sensual impulses and selfish desires. In short, the moral element in the mental life of man appears wholly excluded from Marlowe's works.

This point, which was discussed in our last volume, I have here again brought forward because of its great importance in regard to the point in question. For, in face of these general characteristics of Marlowe's mind and disposition, the reader will here, I think, be forced to ask himself, could Marlowe—the Marlowe whom we know from the dramas that are undoubtedly his, and which must be taken as our standard—have created characters like

the 'good,' conscientious Duke of Gloster, who is always striving to acquire self-control and ever giving proofs of it, or like the pious, dutiful, gentle and amiable Henry VI., who is only entirely wanting in strength of will and energy, or could he have even sketched them in the manner in which they are presented to us in 'The First Part of the Contention' and in 'The True Tragedie'? My opinion is that every impartial reader, comparing these characters with the most prominent personages in Marlowe's dramas, will be inclined to answer in the negative. Marlowe would have made the Duke of Gloster an arrogant, defiant man, silently acquiescing in the plans of his ambitious wife, and retaining possession of the regency as long as possible, — in short, he would have made him a character to whom he could have applied his favourite epithet of 'aspiring.' Marlowe would have placed Henry VI. entirely in the background, have mercilessly branded him as a weak, effeminate, unkingly man, and have caused him to die — like his own 'Edward II.' — grieving and lamenting over his unhappy fate, perhaps with a few cold religious phrases on his lips (such as his Henry of Bourbon in 'The Massacre at Paris,' occasionally uses). At all events it must be admitted — what indeed is an established fact — that not in one of Marlowe's pieces are there any personages at all resembling these two characters.

But before pronouncing a final judgment, let us first enter somewhat more closely into details and compare those of Marlowe's dramas which come into special consideration with the two plays in question, more particularly as regards his composition and treatment of the historical subjects. Of the six tragedies that we possess of Marlowe, two must at once be set aside: 'The Tragical Historie of Doctor Faustus' and 'The Tragedie of Dido, Queen of Carthage.' The latter, because it has been proved that Marlowe was not its sole author, and because it was obviously written for a performance at Court, *i.e.* was not a free composition, but one written under various conditions with regard to the Queen and to the taste of the Court, and, accordingly, very different in spirit and character from Marlowe's other dramas. His 'Doctor Faustus,' as Dyce has proved, we do not

possess in its original form, but so strongly corrupted with additions and corrections that it, too, cannot be regarded as a genuine work of Marlowe's.* Of the other four remaining tragedies, the two *historical* dramas must here occupy the first place; these are 'The Massacre of Paris with the Death of the Duke of Guise,' and 'The troublesome Raigne and lamentable Death of Edward the Second.' Marlowe's 'Tamburlaine' is not a historical drama, for although the object is externally connected with the person of the famous Mussulman Tamerlane (Timur-Leck), still history itself is treated so arbitrarily, so interpolated, altered, and perverted, that the whole piece becomes wild and fantastic in character, and is very far removed from what in Shakspeare's day was called a 'historie.' His 'Jew of Malta' has no historical basis whatever; the whole piece is taken up with the description of a man filled with a passionate, blind, and fierce spirit of revenge, who does not even spare his own child; hence, as regards subject and form, it offers no direct point of comparison.

Marlowe's two historical dramas are among his later works, and are probably even the last plays he presented

* The earliest extant quarto edition is dated 1604, the second 1616. Both show such remarkable differences, that the second must be regarded not merely as enlarged or improved, but, more correctly, as a *refacimento* of the play. But the edition of 1604, also, does not give Marlowe's original text. For it contains a line (in Dyce, ii. 64) mentioning a Spanish doctor, 'Lopus' (Lopez), and the latter and his 'treasonable practices' were first heard of through his legal trial and public execution in the year 1594—hence not till *after* Marlowe's death. (Dyce i. p. xviii). The edition of 1604, accordingly, doubtless contains the play in the form in which it was again brought upon the stage in 1597, with the additions by Th. Dekker, which are expressly referred to by Henslowe; the edition of 1616 is probably the more extensive remodelling which, according to Henslowe, it subsequently experienced at the hands of W. Bird and S. Rowley. This is also Dyce's conjecture, but he does not venture to maintain this extremely probable supposition, because in the older *Taming of a Shrew* (which appeared in print in 1594) he found a passage which he thinks contains 'a seeming imitation of a line in *Faustus*,' and moreover a line which occurs only in the edition of 1616, in a scene which could not possibly have been written by Marlowe. Now, for this reason, the author of the older *Taming of a Shrew* doubtless did not take the line from Marlowe, but, conversely, it was borrowed by Bird and Rowley from the old comedy and introduced among their additions into *Faustus*.

to the stage. As regards his 'Massacre at Paris,' it closes with the death of Henry III. of France, who was murdered on the 1st of August, 1589; accordingly, it cannot have been written earlier than about 1590. In addition to this, when compared with his other plays (with the exception of his 'Edward II.') it exhibits certain traces of a higher degree of maturity, of a progressive development of dramatic art. These traces are still more obvious in his 'Edward II.' In both these pieces the diction—although not, indeed, free from the bombast and extravagance which preponderates in his other plays—is much calmer and more moderate than in 'Tamburlaine,' in 'Faustus,' and in 'The Jew of Malta.' The characters, it is true, are drawn in Marlowe's usual style, but yet they keep more within the given limit of human nature; they are free from that harshness and ruggedness which we otherwise generally meet with in him. The tragic pathos does not border so closely upon what is horrible, and the plays, as a whole, are no longer characterised by that wild romantic colouring peculiar to his other pieces; the composition also, although still suffering from the old defects, nevertheless appears externally, at least, better planned and arranged. Collier and Dyce, therefore, agree in the supposition as to their late origin, but it can scarcely be determined with certainty as to which of the two plays is the older and which the younger. It is probable that they both followed shortly upon one another, yet I am inclined to think that 'The Massacre at Paris' was Marlowe's first dramatic essay in the domain of history. If the piece—as it stands in the old quarto, which has no date, but was probably printed in 1595—be compared with 'Edward II.,' it will be found that in both the representation is dry and sketchy, but that in 'Edward II.' the historical material is more fully worked out, the nucleus of events more clearly brought forward, and the course of the action more definitely motivated; the characters also are more like living realities than we have them portrayed in the sketchy delineations in 'The Massacre at Paris.' The last-named play makes the impression as if it had been written in too hurried a manner, perhaps in consequence of some external motive which may have induced the poet to bring it upon the

stage as quickly as possible. This external motive may have existed in the political relations of England at that time, in the war with Philip of Spain, which had just then closed with the defeat of the Spanish Armada, in the assistance given by the Queen to the oppressed Huguenots, or perhaps in the lively interest which all England took in the course of the bloody struggle concerning the existence of the Protestant Church in France. The death of Henry III. and the accession of Henry IV. were of the highest importance in regard to these interests. It was therefore to be expected that a representation of the massacre of St. Bartholomew and of the events which followed it, would excite lively sympathy among the London theatre-going public. This may have decided Marlowe not only in the choice of the subject—which moreover was one well-adapted to his poetical individuality—but also to clothe it in a dramatic garb as quickly as possible; no wonder, therefore, that the dress is not a perfect fit, that it appears too narrow, too short, and carelessly finished.

Collier, it is true, thinks the striking meagreness and brevity of the representation is to be accounted for partly by the mutilated and corrupt state of the text of the only extant quarto edition. For he has discovered a single leaf upon which is written, in old characters, the short scene of the murder of Mugeron, and this leaf contains many more lines than are found in the same passage in the above-mentioned quarto. Collier believes the page to be a fragment of a prompter's manuscript, and concludes from this that the quarto is simply a 'piratical edition,' giving the text only as taken down during a performance from the mouths of the actors. But this supposition upon a closer examination seems unfounded; at least the condition of the text, as presented by the quarto, gives no occasion for such a supposition. The lines in general are as well constructed as in Marlowe's other pieces; there are no passages in which what was evidently meant to be blank verse has been printed as prose (as in the case of 'The First Part of the Contention'); no demonstrable gaps, no confusion of scenes, no confounding of persons or mis-spelling of their names; and of press errors or mistakes in orthography there are no more than occur in all

the plays printed during the last decade of the sixteenth century. The page found by Collier may nevertheless be a fragment of an old prompter's book; but under the given circumstances it is more probable that this book contained the play in the form it subsequently acquired from the additions made to it by younger poets. Dyce, at least, conjectures that when again brought upon the stage in 1598 (according to Henslowe's Diary) it may have received 'adicyons' of this kind.

Lastly, as regards Collier's supposition that the play was performed for the first time in 1593, and therefore probably the last of Marlowe's dramatic works; it is founded upon a short remark in Henslowe's Diary on the 30th of January, 1593, which runs: 'Rd. at the tragedy of the guyes, etc.,' and in the margin are the letters *ne* (which are supposed to stand for *new*). However, it is very doubtful whether Henslowe meant the word 'guyes' to signify the name Guise; in subsequent remarks at least this style of writing is not again met with, he calls the piece either 'the Gwisse,' or 'the Guise,' or 'the Massacre.' But even granted that 'the tragedy of the guyes' is Marlowe's 'Massacre at Paris,' and that the *ne* signifies *new*, still this would only imply that the play was first played as a new piece on Henslowe's stage in January, 1593 (by the Lord Admiral's company), but not that it could never have been previously played by other companies, for instance by the Earl of Pembroke's who played 'Edward II.,' or by the company belonging to the Duke of Nottingham, who acted 'Dr. Faustus' (as is intimated on the title-page of the extant quartos).

Now if Marlowe's two historical dramas,—and moreover, as his 'Massacre at Paris' is suspected of having been mutilated especially his 'Edward II.'—be compared with 'The First Part of the Contention,' and with 'The True Tragedie,' I think that every impartial reader—that is, every one who examines the plays in and by themselves without regard to other circumstances, questions and relations—will find that the two latter are pervaded by a very different spirit. In the form in which they have come down to us, they indeed likewise appear somewhat dry and sketchy; we find, apart from the corrupt

state of the text, that the poet did not yet understand how to imbue the historical subject with the full warmth of life, nor how appropriately to complete the tradition, or to furnish the historical characters with the finer features of a distinct individuality. But compared with Marlowe's 'Edward II.,' or even with his 'Massacre at Paris,' the two above-mentioned plays are unmistakably distinguished by fulness, by warmth of life, and by historical tact. How ludicrous and unnatural it is in 'The Massacre,' for instance, that Petrus Ramus, when at the point of death, should tell the Duke of Guise of his learned dispute with Schecius, the obscure professor of Tübingen, concerning Aristotle's 'Organon,' and boast of having brought the principles of logic into a better form! How coarse and repulsive the scene between Henry III. and his mother!

In 'Edward II.,' although the whole piece—the tragic pathos as well as the action and its course—turns upon the King's immoderate affection for Gaveston, we nowhere learn the reason, the motive for this passion; we can scarcely guess what the King finds in him so worthy of affection, or what it is that so irresistibly attracts him towards this coarse, uneducated, and heartless man. In so far the development of the action is, so to say, built on air. How utterly devoid of motive is the conduct of the rebellious barons, who first force the King to banish the detested favourite, and then allow themselves to be persuaded by the Queen and Mortimer to consent to his recall, swearing loyalty and obedience to their King, and yet, before Gaveston has returned, and for no reason whatever, mortally offend the King and renew the quarrel at the first appearance of Gaveston—this wearisome quarrel being carried on throughout only by mutual abuse, threats, and rhodomontade! The conduct of the King—his boasting of his royal power, of which at the next moment he acknowledges that it is wholly powerless as opposed to that of the barons,—the manner in which he, without apparent reason, abuses the Queen, and directly afterwards, upon a hint of Gaveston, entreats her forgiveness—is so childish, that it would require some special psychological evidence to render it intelligible in an

ordinary man, and is, therefore, doubly unintelligible in a king. Kent, the King's brother, is equally irresolute, and as weak and as unintelligible a character; at first he takes his brother's part, but suddenly, for no apparent reason, joins the rebel lords, is made a prisoner with some of the latter, escapes to France, and on his return makes war upon his own brother with the Queen's assistance; but again, without any reason, changes his mind, grieves over the King's defeat, and curses his adversaries. Further, how paltry, miserable, and ineffective is the interview between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the rebel barons! This scene which, although of decided importance to the course of the action, is so little remarkable that it merely leaves the impression of a hurried secondary scene. How unmotivated and improbable the sudden appearance of the Queen, who, in order to indulge in her grief, wanders into the woods, but, as it seems, loses herself there, and falls in with the barons, who are in negotiation with the Archbishop! How unmeaning, inappropriate, and awkward the following scene, where Gaveston joins Kent only to give utterance to the lines:

“Edmund, the mighty prince of Lancaster
That hath more earldoms than an ass can bear,
And both the Mortimers, two goodly men,
With Guy of Warwick, that redoubted knight,
Are gone towards Lambeth: there let them remain.”

After which both again quit the stage! How undignified and even unworthy of a Gaveston are his last words, in reply to the announcement of his sentence of death:

• “I thank you all, my Lords! then I perceive,
That heading is one and hanging is the other,
And death is all.”

This would be the answer of a bandit or garrotter, but not of a royal favourite, however worthless.

Now such violations against propriety, against the scenic arrangement of the subject-matter, against the psychological truth of the characters and the motives of the action are nowhere to be found in the two dramas in question, in spite of their many and great defects in

individual points (especially as regards diction). On the contrary, we here not only have a greater variety of different characters than in any of Marlowe's plays, but these characters, even though drawn but in a sketchy manner, and frequently obscure and awkward in the expression of their feelings and thoughts (in consequence of the corrupt state of the text), are nevertheless well planned, naturally conceived, and speak and act throughout in accordance with their natures, as well as with the relations and circumstances in which they are placed; their natural peculiarities also become unfolded with the course of the action. The latter develops on the given historical basis out of the characters, the interests, the motives and aims, the emotions and passions of the dramatic personages, with that internal necessity which distinguishes historical truth. The arrangement and the succession of the scenes can so readily be surveyed that, in spite of the multiplicity of the events, we never lose sight of the thread. The meaning and significance of the portion of history which is represented, is not, indeed, grasped with sufficient clearness and depth, but, as a whole, the plays manifest a more profound understanding of the historical subject and the forces forming it, than is to be found in any of Marlowe's dramas. In short, the delineation of the characters as well as the composition is decidedly superior to Marlowe's contributions to historical drama.

Moreover, if Marlowe were the author of the two plays, he must have written them at the time when he was also working at his 'Massacre' and his 'Edward II.' For R. Greene wrote his 'Groatsworth of Wit' (where he quotes a line from 'The True Tragedie') before the 3rd of September, 1592, on which day he died. Hence 'The True Tragedie' must have been on the boards about the middle of that year, probably even earlier, as Greene would only have alluded to a piece that had frequently been played and was generally known, if his thrust was to strike home. And as 'The True Tragedie' is but a continuation of 'The First Part of the Contention,' the latter was no doubt written *before* 'The True Tragedie,' and hence cannot well have appeared later than 1591. Ac-

cordingly (if my conjecture be accepted) it had presumably appeared on the stage soon after Marlowe's 'Massacre' (in Collier's opinion two years before the latter); but at all events only a short period of time can have intervened between the date of its composition and that of 'The Massacre and of 'Edward II.' It would be a most remarkable phenomenon in the history of literature to find that a poet, in the same period of his life, and in the same domain of dramatic art, should have produced such different works, and moreover, the better ones, previous to those that are inferior.

The main point, however, is that in 'The First Part of the Contention,' and still more so in 'The True Tragedie,' there occur scenes of which every reader capable of judging—if only he is unprejudiced—must admit at a first glance that they could not possibly have been written by Marlowe. Take, for instance, the description of the insurrection of the people headed by Jack Cade at the instigation of the Duke of York. In none of Marlowe's dramas have the people been allowed to play any part—in fact, he has not written one comic scene; he did not, as it seems, possess any talent for comedy, or perhaps, in his strivings after the grand and the pathetic, despised it, considering any admixture of comedy a mere disturbance of the tragic effect. This scene, therefore, I consider so important, so decisive in regard to the point at issue, that I give it here, so that the reader, who may not have the two old plays at hand, can judge of it himself:—

Enter JACKE CADE, DICKE BUTCHER, ROBIN, WILL, TOM, HARRY, and
the rest, with long staves.

Cade. Proclaime silence.

All. Silence.

Cade. I, John Cade, so named for my valiancie—

Dicke (*aside*). Or rather for stealing of a Cade of Sprats.

Cade. My father was a Mortemer.

Dicke (*aside*). He was an honest man and a good Bricklayer.

Cade. My mother came of the Brases.

Will (*aside*). She was a Pedler's daughter indeed, and sold many
lases.

Robin (*likewise*). And now being not able to occupie her furd
packe, she washes buckes up and down the country.

Cade. Therefore I am honourably borne.

Harry (aside). I, for the field is honourable; for he was borne under the hedge; for his father had no house but the Cage

Cade. I am able to endure much.

George (aside). That's true, I know he can endure anything. For I have seen him whipt two market days together.

Cade. I feare neither sword nor fire.

Will (aside). He need not feare the sword, for his coate is of prooffe.

Dicke. But methinks he should feare the fire being so often burnt in the hand for stealing of sheepe.

Cade. Therefore be brave, for your Captain is brave, and vowes reformation: you shall have seven half-penny loaves for a penny, and the three hoopt pot shall have ten hoopes, and it shall be felony to drink small beere, and if I be king, as king I will be—

All. God save your maiestie.

Cade. I thanke you, good people, you shall all eate and drinke of my score, and go all in my liverie, and weele have no writing but the score and the tally, and there shall be no lawes but such as come from my mouth.

Dicke (aside). We shall have sore laws then, for he was thrust into the mouth the other day.

George. I, and stinking law too, for his breath stinks so, that one cannot abide it.

Enter WILL with the Clarke of Chattam.

Will. Oh Captaine, a pryze.

Cade. Who'se that, Will?

Will. The Clarke of Chattam, he can write and reade and caste account, I took him setting a boyes coppies, and he has a booke in his pocket with red letters.

Cade. Sonnes, hees a conjurer, bring him hither. Now sir, what's your name?

Clarke. Emanuell, sir, and it shall please you.

Dicke. It will go hard with you, I can tell you, for they use to write that oth top of letters.

Cade. And what do you use to write your name? Or do you as auncient forefathers have done, use the score and the Tally?

Clarke. Nay, true sir, I praise God I have been so well brought up, that I can write mine owne name.

Cade. Oh he's confest, go hang him with his penny inkhorne about his necke.

Exit one with the Clarke. Enter TOM.

Tome. Captaine, Newes, newes, Sir Humphrey Stafford and his brother are comming with the kings power, and mean to kill us all.

Cade. Let them come, hees but a knight is he?

Tom. No, no, hees but a knight.

Cade. Why then to equall him, ile make myselfe knight. Kneele down John Mortemer, Rise up Sir John Mortemer. Is there any more of them that be knights?

Tom. I, his brother.

Cade. (*He knights DICKE BUTCHER*). Then kneele down Dicke Butcher, Rise up Sir Dicke Butcher. Now sound up the drumme, etc.

This and the other scenes where Cade and his companions appear, show such marked affinity with the sarcastic and humorous tone in which Shakspeare describes the people and allows them to express themselves (for instance, in 'Julius Cæsar,' 'Coriolanus,' 'Henry IV.,' and 'Henry V.'), and are so entirely different from anything in Marlowe's pieces, that if not written by Shakspeare, still less can they have come from Marlowe's pen. Just as much in the style of Shakspeare, and therefore as little in that of Marlowe, is the parting-scene between the Queen and Suffolk, the account of the death of Cardinal Winchester, the soliloquies of Henry VI., and more particularly the murder of Henry, and the famous monologue (*I am myself alone*) of Richard, afterwards the Third.

CHAPTER II.

‘THE FIRST PART OF THE CONTENTION’ AND ‘THE TRUE TRAGEDIE’—*continued.*

IF, after what has been said in our last chapter, impartial criticism cannot possibly consider the above two plays as belonging to Marlowe, and still less as the works of Greene, Peele, or Lodge, why may they not have been written by Shakspeare?

Malone was only consistent with his own views when, after having unhesitatingly denied that Shakspeare had any share in ‘The First Part of the Contention’ and in ‘The True Tragedie,’ he also refused to acknowledge him as the author of the three parts of ‘Henry VI.’ The following are Malone’s reasons for his view which, in all essential points, is still adhered to by English critics, who accordingly agree with him in rejecting the plays. In the first place they are said to be in every respect too bad and unworthy of Shakspeare. I, on my part, deny this with the fullest conviction, and await the proof which has not yet been adduced, either by Malone or any other critic. It is true, that compared with Shakspeare’s later masterpieces, with ‘Richard II.,’ with ‘Henry IV.,’ etc.—but *only* with these—the two plays do seem imperfect, and to present such great defects as to fall far into the shade. The more important of these defects have already been pointed out on p. 264. The characters are drawn in too sketchy a manner, the figures do not stand out with sufficient fulness and roundness, the meaning and significance of the historical facts have not been clearly enough grasped and explained; the poet was not yet capable of throwing life into the historical subject; the composition, therefore, was hard and stiff, mechanically put together rather than organically arranged, and the action not clearly and thoroughly motived; the dialogue runs too frequently

into that play upon antitheses and points (in imitation of Italian writers) where verse corresponds to verse, and line to line, and is occasionally spun out to excess (for instance in the scene between King Edward and Lady Grey, part iii., act iii. 2). Still, all these defects do not prove what has been inferred from them; and, in the first place, it is wrong to compare these plays with Shakspeare's later masterpieces. As the *first* experiment of a young poet in the difficult domain of historical drama, they show such eminent talent, and so far surpass all dramas on historical subjects *previously* written, that no work of the same date can in any way equal them, at all events none have hitherto been pointed out.

Malone further misses what he calls 'Shakspearian passages,' that is, those brilliant passages where the fulness of Shakspeare's genius relieves itself in sudden flashes. I have already pointed out some passages of this kind, for instance, Richard's well-known and deeply significant words: *I am myself alone*; but, upon the whole, they certainly do occur less frequently than in Shakspeare's later works. However, to some extent, this can be accounted for by the fact that the plays describe a portion of history which, being wholly wanting in great and eminent characters, as well as in ethical motives and important aims, offered but little opportunity for higher flights of thought. But Malone's objection again more particularly overlooks the fact that the plays are the first attempts of a young poet, and that even genius does not sparkle and shine purely from within itself, but that—like the poorest of minds—it requires development, both schooling and training. Shakspeare did not receive this training till he came to London, and moreover had, at the same time, to endeavour to make all possible good use of his talent in order to obtain the necessaries of life. It was not Shakspeare's good fortune, like Goethe, to enter upon his artistic career with a well-prepared mind and ample means, and yet even in Goethe's *Mitschuldigen* and in his *Laune des Verliebten*, there is as little trace of those flashes of genius of which we have such an abundance in his later works.

The smaller the number of the 'Shakspearian passages,'

the more numerous, in Malone's opinion, are the deviations from historical truth, and these are said to be more numerous, and more important than Shakspeare has elsewhere ventured to make. But Malone urges more especially those contradictions (already cursorily mentioned) between the first part of 'Henry VI.' and the two following parts, and between the last part and 'Richard III.' However, apart from the fact that, as Malone himself elsewhere * points out, similar differences and deviations occur in all of Shakspeare's other dramas, the censured contradictions, as already said, refer to such unimportant, secondary circumstances, that the poet—who wrote for a sympathetic audience and not for critical readers—did not require to pay any regard to them. They can moreover, in some degree, be explained by the fact that the first part of 'Henry VI.' was probably a subsequent addition to the other two parts, and that all three parts are, as regards date, separated from 'Richard III.' by a longer space of time than is generally assumed. Nevertheless, it is again true that in 'Henry VI.' we find more numerous deviations from the historical authorities which Shakspeare made use of than in his later historical plays. But apart from the fact that, as already observed,† Malone and his successors, down to Courtenay and Gervinus, have accused Shakspeare of inaccuracies and deviations of which he was not guilty, the historical subject in the present cases absolutely demanded a freer treatment, if it was to be brought successfully into a dramatic form. And if Shakspeare, in making use of this licence, has occasionally exceeded the demand required and allowed by the law of the historical drama—which, however, has not been proved—this again was owing to a want of experience, a want of mental and artistic culture; in short, it was his youthful immaturity that prevented him from penetrating into, and artistically mastering the traditional subject in such a manner as to conform to the laws of dramatic form without making considerable alterations.

* Reed's *Shakspeare*, t. xiv. p. 224 f. 236 f.

† See vol. ii. p. 287 f.

Accordingly, of all Malone's arguments there remain only those concerning the language and versification. Here Malone is perfectly right, in so far as the diction in 'Henry VI.' is more obsolete, the rhythm of the verse more prosaic, rhymes of less frequent occurrence, and—we add—the language in general of a dryer, more colourless and more unpoetical character, even than in those plays which are acknowledged to be among Shakspeare's earliest works; in fact, as Dyce* says, the two plays are written 'in the manner of an older school.' But this remark, far from proving their spuriousness, speaks rather in favour of their genuineness. I have already shown that 'The First Part of the Contention' was brought upon the stage, at latest, in 1591, and that 'The True Tragedie,' which was a well-known piece in 1592, must have directly followed it. Hence, in whatever connection the two plays may be placed with the second and third parts of 'Henry VI.,' the trilogy bearing this title must be reckoned among the earliest works of Shakspeare; and the above-mentioned peculiarities of the language prove only that they were probably written even before 1591. At all events—and this is undisputed and indisputable—if they were written by Shakspeare, they were his *first* attempts in historical drama. Now, as I think, it would be far more astonishing and would offer more occasion for doubt, if the early works of young Shakspeare—who, as already said, had in London to make up for his want of school training and to pursue his artistic studies—had *not* followed the best and favourite models of his day, and if his plays had *not* been written in the manner of the 'older school' which he found existing. For instance, a painting said to be by Raffaele and belonging to as early a date as 1500, would, by every connoisseur, at once be declared to be spurious, were it to show no trace of Perugino's style, and simply the characteristics of the mature Raffaele. Now as Perugino was Raffaele's model, so Marlowe and Greene—who towards 1590 were the most popular

* In his Chronology of Shakspeare's plays.

dramatic poets—were doubtless the masters whom young Shakspeare took as his models. In fact, 'Titus Andronicus,' to which the plays under discussion show unmistakable resemblance—not only in spirit and character, but also in language and versification—exhibits even greater affinity to Marlowe's style. And if this affinity to the 'older school' is more distinctly apparent in 'Titus Andronicus' than in those plays universally acknowledged to be Shakspeare's youthful works, it is to be accounted for simply by the fact that all the other pieces were *comedies*, in regard to which Shakspeare did not find any such generally recognised or worthy models as were presented by Marlowe for tragedy and history. It may also be that *young* Shakspeare felt that historical truth—which from the first he had respected more than his predecessors—demanded that in a historical play, the language should not differ too much from that of his historical authority, and that poetical embellishments, high-sounding and pathetic diction should be moderated; in short, that historical truth called for a more antique and subdued colouring. On the other hand, the circumstance of the plays so directly following the older school, and in part, therefore, bearing some of its faults, might have been the means of *preserving* their antique character. After Shakspeare had added the first part to the last two parts of his 'Henry VI.,' which were probably written last,—as may be assumed from the appearance of 'The First Part of the Contention' and 'The True Tragedie'—these plays, being greatly eclipsed by 'Richard III.,' 'Richard II.,' and 'Henry IV.,' etc., may no longer have proved so attractive on the stage, although, as popular pieces with the multitude, they were doubtless still often performed during the first ten years of the century. Shakspeare, accordingly, may not have found either outward or inward occasion to make the 'adicyons' and revisions which in those days it was customary to make when a play was revived, and which doubtless he bestowed upon the majority of the works belonging to the first period of his poetical career, but which were difficult to make without completely reconstructing the whole play. This is why,

as I think, there are no quartos of the three parts of 'Henry VI.,' and indeed why there never were any, for there is no mention of them among the entries at Stationers' Hall. They probably ceased to be performed, at a later day, on Shakspeare's own stage, whereas the second and third parts which, in the form of 'The First Part of the Contention,' and of 'The True Tragedie,' had come into the possession of the Earl of Pembroke's company, may still have been frequently given on this inferior stage and have found acceptance with its public.

The last-mentioned circumstance leads to the consideration of the external reasons why Shakspeare may be considered the author of the two plays. As regards the three parts of 'Henry VI.,' they are externally as well authenticated as any other play bearing Shakspeare's name. Heminge and Condell have unhesitatingly and unconditionally admitted them into their edition of Shakspeare's works (the well-known folio of 1623), although they might easily have expressed their doubts that the plays had only been remodelled by Shakspeare. Heminge and Condell were friends and companions of Shakspeare's, to whom, in his will, he left small sums of money for the purchase of rings; they had acted with him for many years, and no doubt even in Shakspeare's own plays; hence they ought and must have possessed accurate and authentic knowledge of his works. It is also evident that they did not act either carelessly or thoughtlessly as regards the collection of the materials for their edition of the poet's works. For not only did they not accept any of those pieces in which it is perfectly clear that Shakspeare had no share—although some of these, as we shall presently see, were printed with his name in full on the title-page—but they also left out plays which had a strong claim to be considered genuine and which likewise had been publicly ascribed to him during his own lifetime; their reason for acting thus may have been because they were nevertheless doubtful as to the origin of the plays,—perhaps, however, because they had simply forgotten them, as in the case of 'Troilus and Cressida.' In addition to the testimony of Heminge

and Condell, Shakspeare himself bears witness to the three parts of 'Henry VI.' being his own; in the epilogue to 'Henry V.' he says:

"Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crown'd king
Of France and England, did this king succeed;
Whose state so many had the managing,
That they lost France, and made his England bleed:
Which oft our stage hath shown; and, *for their sake*
In your fair minds let this acceptance take."

The plural *their*, at the same time, proves that several plays representing the reign of Henry VI. had been presented to the public. Hence' it is not only the first part—which Collier concedes to him—Shakspeare here declares all three parts to be his. It would be more than strange if the poet, in the above words, had meant to claim a favourable reception for *his* work because the work of *another* had previously met with public favour, or, what is the same thing, if he had referred to plays of which only a very small portion had been his own work. But even supposing that Shakspeare, in the above passage, was not speaking in his own name, but in that of the stage and theatrical companies generally, it would nevertheless be equally strange if reference were made to plays which had originally belonged to *other* companies, in order to recommend to the public a new piece belonging to Shakspeare's own company.*

But, it seems to me, the chief circumstance which is usually brought forward in opposition to Shakspeare's being the author of 'The First Part of the Contention' and of 'The True Tragedie,' in reality speaks in *favour* of the

* In face of these testimonies it is, I think, a matter of little importance that Meres does not mention *Henry VI.* in 'his *Palladis Tamia*. Meres only intended, by way of example, to mention those plays of Shakspeare's which, according to his judgment, were the best; perhaps he may not have considered the three parts of *Henry VI.* good enough to figure by the side of *Richard III.*, *Richard II.*, and *Henry IV.*; perhaps he may not have remembered them, as they were not being played at the time when he was writing his work; perhaps—and this seems to me the most probable supposition—the name of *Henry VI.* dropped out from the list of the dramas mentioned, in consequence of the careless manner in which, as is well known, printing was executed in those days.

supposition. On the title-page of the old quarto of 'The True Tragedie,' we find the remark, 'as it was sundry times acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Pembroke his servants.' And as both plays are so closely connected, it is probable that not only 'The True Tragedie,' but 'The First Part of the Contention' also, was likewise given by the company of the Earl of Pembroke, although the extant prints of the latter piece do not mention the company by whom it was played. Now, if it be assumed that both plays were written by Marlowe or any other poet, it inevitably follows that Shakspeare must in some way have got possession of these plays in order to make use of them in the second and third parts of his 'Henry VI.,' and had them performed in the Globe or in Blackfriars. But under the circumstances of the time—where every play became the property of the theatre as soon as it had been accepted—it was generally only by means of a species of fraud that possession could be obtained of a play belonging to another theatre, especially when the play had met with approval and had drawn large audiences. Are we then to suppose that Shakspeare had a hand in such violations of the laws of property? Is it to be assumed that he went so far as merely to furnish the stolen plays with additions, and then to intimate that they were his own works? From all we know of Shakspeare's character, such an hypothesis would be an insult to the great poet. In fact, so far as I remember, there is no instance of Shakspeare's company (the Lord Chamberlain's players whom King James subsequently took into his service, and who evidently held a distinguished position among their numerous rivals) ever having committed such a theft. But we do know that a number of Shakspeare's plays were acted on other stages. For it is an authentically established fact that Alleyn, the most eminent actor of the Lord Admiral's company, had played Lear, Pericles, Henry VIII., Romeo, and Othello. The Lord Admiral's company were for some time under the direction of Henslowe, and according to his Diary (p. 35) they played in the theatre at Newington Butts in 1594, together with the Lord Chamberlain's company. Now

this same Henslowe was also connected with the company of the Earl of Pembroke; at least, under the 23rd of October, 1597 (p. 103), he says that he purchased for forty shillings the manuscript of a new piece for the servants of the Lord Admiral and the Earl of Pembroke. Why then may not 'The First Part of the Contention' and 'The True Tragedie' also have, rightfully or wrongfully, come into the possession of the Earl of Pembroke's company? There is, of course, always the possibility of their having been obtained lawfully. However, it is more probable they were unlawfully acquired; at all events this supposition is supported by the condition in which the two plays have come down to us, and of which we shall directly have to speak.

I have, however, still to meet another objection raised against Shakspeare, and which at the same time forms the starting-point to the whole controversy. Namely, R. Greene, in the well-known passage in his 'Groatsworth of Wit,' accuses young Shakspeare of having beautified himself in the feathers of others. This assertion, it has been thought, could not have been altogether unfounded, and as Greene on the same occasion quotes a line from 'The True Tragedie' or the third part of 'Henry VI.,' it has been thought that Greene evidently referred to these plays, and mentioned them as the *corpus delicti* in question. I, on my part, cannot conceive why Greene's accusation might not have been wanting in real foundation. At all events, Chettle, the publisher of Greene's pamphlet, says in a passage in his 'Kinde Hart's Dream,' of Shakspeare: 'The other, whom at that time I did not so much spare as since I wish I had (by omitting and correcting some of Greene's remarks), because myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he was excellent in the quality he professes; besides, divers men of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his art.' Chettle, therefore, had obviously come to the conviction that Greene's assertion was untrue, or at least unproved or much exaggerated. Still, although Greene may be supposed to have had some reason for his accusation, I nevertheless think that the

inference from his own words is precisely the contrary of what has been concluded from them in regard to the point in question. For, after having warned his associates (Marlowe, Lodge, and others) that they might all be forsaken by those who now admired them—as had been in his own case—he adds: ‘Yes, trust them not; for there is an upstart crow, *beautified with our feathers*, that, with his *Tigre’s heart wrapt in a player’s hide*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke-verse as the best of you, and being an absolute Johannes-fac-totum, is in his owne conceit the only Shak-scene in a country.’ The substance and form of these words prove, first of all, that they proceeded from an invidious spirit of envy and ill-will, and consequently do not deserve full credit. They further prove that Shakspeare, although still young (an upstart crow), already ranked high as a dramatic poet, and that he had worked in *all* the branches of dramatic art (an absolute Johannes-factotum), and accordingly must have also written historical dramas. Now which were these plays? Greene points them out so distinctly, that there can be no doubt about the question. For the words ‘with his Tigre’s heart wrapt in a player’s hide’ are taken from ‘The True Tragedie,’ where we have them in the following form: ‘Oh Tyger’s hart wrapt in a woman’s hide’ (spoken by the captive Duke of York, who is cruelly insulted and aggrieved by Queen Margaret). Moreover, this line occurs not only in ‘The True Tragedie,’ but also in the same passage in the third part of ‘Henry VI.’ The quotation is well chosen. It proves, in fact, that Shakspeare was able to bombast out a blank-verse as well as Marlowe, Peele, and Lodge. For not only the line itself, but the whole speech of the Duke, shows distinct traces of that highflown, pathetic mode of expression which is characteristic of Marlowe’s school, and which was followed by young Shakspeare even though in a moderated form, and but in occasional instances. On the other hand, the quotation would lose all its point, as well as all its sense, were it not taken from a work of Shakspeare’s, but from one belonging to Marlowe or even Greene. And yet this very line is supposed to prove that ‘The True Tragedie’ was not

written by Shakspeare. Such perversity, unless seen at once, is beyond argument. I shall therefore only draw attention to the fact that Greene, who obviously had no very friendly feeling towards Shakspeare, would assuredly have come forward in a very different manner, had he been able to accuse him of having appropriated whole plays which had originally been published by himself or one of his friends—a theft of which Shakspeare would have been guilty had he, in the manner described above, made use of ‘The First Part of the Contention’ and of ‘The True Tragedie,’ for the second and third parts of his ‘Henry VI.’ The words ‘beautified with our feathers’—whether the charge is founded or unfounded—can therefore only signify what, in fact, is their natural sense, that Shakspeare had borrowed single epithets, phrases, images, and perhaps even a few lines from Greene’s or from Marlowe’s dramas.* Dyce has, indeed, pointed out some few lines in ‘The First Part of the Contention’ and in ‘The True Tragedie’ which possess more or less resemblance to passages in Marlowe’s ‘Edward II.,’ and which, accordingly, a selfish and jealous author might have regarded as stolen property. However, in my opinion, it is certainly doubtful whether ‘Edward II.’ did not appear *after* ‘The First Part of the Contention’ and ‘The True Tragedie,’ and whether, therefore, it was not Marlowe that might be accused of the plagiarism. Be that as it may, Greene’s testimony is a new proof that Shakspeare was the author of the two plays, even though not in their present form.

There are still a few circumstances to be mentioned which are not exactly of much weight, and yet not undeserving of consideration. The two plays in question were first printed in 1594 and 1595, and were republished in 1600. In all these editions the name of the author is suppressed. Marlowe had died as early as 1593; accordingly, had he been the author it is difficult to see why his celebrated name should have been withheld when it is given in the old edition of his ‘Faustus,’ although this

* Did not Shakspeare subsequently, when at the height of his poetic celebrity, introduce a witches’ song from Middleton’s drama, *The Witch*, into his *Macbeth*!

piece contained 'adicyons' made by the hand of another. Now Shakspeare lived till 1616; he, therefore, could have protested against the publication of a work under his name, the possession of which the publisher had acquired by unlawful means, and the print of which gave the original in a mutilated and corrupt form. The possibility of such a protest no longer existed after Shakspeare's death, and, lo! in the year 1619, a new edition of the two plays actually appeared with Shakspeare's name in full on the title-page, and enlarged by additions from the second and third parts of 'Henry VI.*' This fresh proof is again supported by an entry in the Stationers' registers; under the date of April 19th, 1602, we have the following remark: 'Thom. Pavier: By assignment from Th. Millington (the publisher of the editions of 1594-95 and 1600), salvo jure cujuscunque: the First and Second Parts of Henry VI., two books.†' This entry, evidently refers to our two plays, the first of which is always called 'The *First* Part of the Contention,' and both of which, in the edition of 1619, were comprised under the title of 'The *whole* Contention between the two famous Houses of Lancaster and York,' by the same Th. Pavier who had received them from Millington. The fact of their being called, in the entry, the first and second parts of 'Henry VI.' can hardly rest upon a mere 'mistake,' as Halliwell thinks. It is doubtless more probable that Shakspeare's three tragedies (after the first part had been added) had long been established at the different theatres under their present titles, and that—as Th. Pavier was well aware—'The Part of the Contention' and 'The True Tragedie' were originally written by Shakspeare, and now formed the second and third parts of his 'Henry VI.'; hence, in his remark on the title-page, Pavier expressed himself more briefly, and without considering the inaccuracy it contained, designated them as 'the first and second parts of Henry VI.'

We now come to the question, In what relation do the two plays, if originally Shakspeare's works, stand to the second and third parts of 'Henry VI.'? Al. Schmidt is

* Compare Halliwell, *l. c.* p. 16 f.

† Halliwell, p. 7.

of opinion that the 'First Part of the Contention' and 'The True Tragedie' in Millington's edition are nothing but piratical editions of the two last parts of 'Henry VI,' giving Shakspeare's text in the mutilated and corrupt form which it may have received from being taken down from the mouths of the actors by a bad short-hand writer. Schmidt* goes on to say: "There is here no question of a free imitation which, by the introduction of new groupings, by giving greater depth to the motives and by raising the substance of the ideas, would make the work of one author the property of another. The whole economy and arrangement of the scenes in Millington's plays, the whole plan and development of the characters are the same as in Shakspeare; nay, even the greater portion of the lines correspond word for word. The difference is only that in Millington sometimes a series of lines is wanting, sometimes the expressions in single instances somewhat different; gaps, however, as well as deviations are, with but few exceptions, of that sort that they could scarcely have been the work of a half-educated person, much less of poets such as Marlowe or Greene. It is only prejudiced criticism that could ignore the fact that we have here to do with pirated editions of Shakspeare's plays, jumbled together from hurried notes and awkward supplementary passages. It would not have been difficult, even without the aid of stenography, to have obtained complete possession of the plays—which existed only in the form of stage manuscripts—by appointing two or several short-hand writers, or otherwise making use of the repeated performances of the plays. But Millington seems to have avoided this trouble and expense. He probably employed but one writer, whom he commissioned to direct his attention chiefly to the arrangement of the dialogue of the plays, and for this purpose to take special note of the beginnings of the speeches and of any striking words from the middle of them. Accordingly, almost invariably we find that the first lines of the conversations correspond, and that the deviations and omissions are to be found more in the course of the speeches. Where the

* In his *Introduction to Henry VI.*, Part 2, in the *Shakspeare-Uebersetzung der Deutschen Shaksp.-Gesellschaft*, vol. iii. p. 7 f.

conversations changed rapidly, and the pen could not follow, the dialogue is abridged in the most remarkable manner.* It is also clear in what way the whole edition was made; the person employed by Millington cannot have been any literary celebrity, but in fact an ignoramus, not even acquainted with iambic rhythm, and who, when filling up passages, generally turned simple prose into lines written as verse; neither can he have understood Latin, and had, therefore, to leave out Shakspeare's Latin quotations; further, he has shown himself ignorant of English history, and made historical errors such as could not possibly have originated with Marlowe or Greene, much less with Shakspeare.† Where this short-hand writer makes an attempt to fill up an omission from his own memory or out of his own head, he does so, at best, with the most miserable commonplaces, not rarely with pure nonsense.‡ When these are not at his command, he puts passages with no sort of connection side by side, passages such as no person in their senses would put

* "Compare the scene where Simpcox appears (ii. 2), and the first introduction of Jack Cade" (iv. 2).

† "In act ii. 2, of *The First Part of the Contention*, where the Duke of York's title to the crown is explained, Salisbury confounds the Duke with Roger Mortimer, and causes the former to be kept prisoner and to be killed by Glendower. In the same scene, Warwick's armorial crest (a bear chained to a stake) is changed into 'the bear, environed with ten thousand ragged staves!' The Queen, in parting from Suffolk, says: 'I'll have an *Iris* that shall find thee out.' Millington's *employé* turns the word into *Irish*!"

‡ "In the hunting-scene with hawks (act ii. 1) Shakspeare makes King Henry say:—

"See how God in all his creatures works!
Yea man and birds are fain of climbing high."

It is evident that the first of these lines might have been written by a poet—whether he were called Greene, Shakspeare, or by any other name—to introduce a general observation such as is contained in the second line. In *The First Part of the Contention*, however, the passage runs thus:—

"How wonderful the Lord's works are on earth,
Even in these silly creatures of His hands!
Uncle Gloster, how high your hawk did soar,
And on a sudden souc'd the partridge down."

Only an ignorant plagiarist could have thus mutilated the passage."

together.* The order of the scenes he, as a rule, gives correctly—(this is a point which cannot have given him any great trouble)—but where special attention was required as regards the entrance or exit of the personages, there is no lack of extraordinary confusion.† In short,

* “We confine ourselves to giving a single, but peculiarly instructive example, being convinced that it will fully suffice to establish the reader’s judgment. We beg him carefully to read the speech of the Duchess of Gloster, in act ii. 1, where she is trying to arouse the Duke’s ambition. In *The First Part of the Contention* the same passage takes the following form:

‘Why droope my lord like over-ripened corn,
Hanging the head at Cearies plenteous load?
What see’st thou, Duke Humphrey? King Henry’s crown?
Reach at it, and if thine arm be too short,
Mine shall lengthen it. Art not thou a prince,
Uncle to the king, and his protector?
Then what shouldst thou lack that might content thy mind?’

That even the very worst of poets could not have written such incoherent stuff, requires no proof. But if we transport ourselves (in imagination) into Shakspeare’s theatre and look over the writer’s shoulder, we shall from this one instance get an insight into the whole history of the origin of Millington’s plays.—The writer takes down the first two lines; he then becomes uncomfortable, for in directing his full attention to these he has lost the Duchess’s next words. While he was writing, four other lines had been spoken, which are indeed absolutely necessary for the connection of those following, but he simply leaves them out. Then he sets his pen to work with the words: ‘What see’st thou,’ etc., but again loses three lines, till he comes to ‘Reach at it.’ While taking note of the image ‘if thine arm be too short, mine shall lengthen it,’ he unfortunately misses the end of the speech. Now as the close of every speech is well known to be its most indispensable and best part, the writer therefore makes one of his own, and moreover in such a manner as to contradict all that had been previously said, inasmuch as he makes the appeal to the Duke’s ambition end with the words: ‘Then what shouldst thou lack that might content thy mind?’—Let us look at the other side of the question, as it appears to Malone and Dyce, that is, Shakspeare engaged in turning Millington’s nonsense into intelligible and genuine poetry by interpolations! In doing this he would have set himself a task such as is sometimes given in schools, where entirely opposite ideas are set before the scholars, who are then required to put them together in the form of a narrative or essay. Such a task might possibly sometimes be demanded of young persons by a pedagogue, but surely no sensible person would ever set himself such a piece of work.”

† ‘Compare the scene where the petition is presented, and where the Queen boxes the ears of the Duchess, in Shakspeare, act i. 3, with the same scene in *The First Part of the Contention*.’

the plagiarism is here so awkward, that it could not deceive any, except those who find it a confirmation of their own prejudiced opinions."

It is a great satisfaction to me that so excellent a Shakspearian scholar as Al. Schmidt unreservedly agrees with my view. I believe that I was the first to offer the opinion* that the text of Millington's editions of 'The First Part of the Contention' and of 'The True Tragedie' could not possibly have been based either upon the author's manuscript, or upon the original stage manuscript. For there occur numerous passages which had evidently been written in blank verse by the poet, but which, owing to having been mutilated, were printed as prose, and, conversely, passages which had been written as prose (such as the above-quoted interview between Cade and his comrades) which appeared printed as verse; besides this, in many cases words have been omitted and the rhythm destroyed, and in others again—especially where several proper names were mentioned in succession—the lines of the verse have been completely corrupted.

Yet I do not think that the text upon which Millington's editions are based, and which was certainly very much disfigured by the short-hand writer, was the text of the last two parts of 'Henry VI.,' in the form we now have them. This, in the first place, is opposed by the circumstance that, as already said, in 'The First Part of the Contention' entire scenes (only a few, it is true) differ so completely from the corresponding scenes in the second part of 'Henry VI.,' that the agreement is, generally speaking, only in the subject. It is further remarkable that only the second and third parts of 'Henry VI.' are included in the above-mentioned quartos. Why was the first part omitted, and the second part, on the title-page, called 'The First Part of the Contention'? Probably, no doubt, because the first part had not yet been written, whereas the two other parts, at the time, were already among the most popular histories on the public stage, and had therefore been unlawfully appropriated by the Earl of Pembroke's company. Millington, we may

* In the second edition of this book, and more fully in an article contributed to the *Jahrbuch d. Deutschen Shaks.-Gesellschaft*, i. 89.

assume, had the two pieces printed as they were given by Pembroke's company, probably after he, on his part, had obtained possession of a copy of the text in an illegal manner; perhaps, however, it was a copy of the version played by Pembroke's company, who may have let Millington have it, because the plays did not belong to the company and had not cost them anything.* No wonder, therefore, that they were published in a terribly mutilated form. The above supposition would also explain the curious title. The play being called 'The *First* Part of the Contention,' unmistakably points to the fact that 'The True Tragedie' was originally called 'The *Second* Part of the Contention,' and that it was intentionally renamed on its publication, or by Pembroke's company. It is probable, therefore, that Shakspeare originally presented the two plays to the stage under the following title: 'The first' and 'The second Part of the Contention,' and that he did not change it into 'The first, second, and third parts of Henry VI.,' till he had written the first part of his 'Henry VI.' And if this first part was not written and added till a somewhat later day, then it is more than probable that he, at the same time, also revised or remodelled the second or third parts. At what period this was done, cannot, of course, be determined. As, however, in my opinion, the second and third parts may have appeared on the stage in their first form as 'The first and second Part of the Contention,' as early as about 1589-90, I am inclined to assume that the first part must have followed them as early as 1591.

If, in conclusion, we take in review the series of internal and external reasons which support the supposition of the genuineness of the three parts of 'Henry VI.,' and which, therefore, speak in favour of Shakspeare's being the author of 'The First Part of the Contention' and of 'The True Tragedie,' we shall not be surprised to find that even the

* The first quarto of *Romeo and Juliet*, also, which is likewise obviously a piratical edition of the year 1597, gives us the play, (according to the title-page) 'as it hath been often plaid publicquely, by the right honourable the Lord of Hunsdon his Seruants,' whereas the second quarto of 1599 was 'acted by the right Honourable the Chamberlaine his Seruants,' that is, by Shakspeare's company.

prejudice of English critics is gradually beginning to give way. It has been overcome by Charles Knight; the view taken by Halliwell, who agrees with the editors of the Cambridge edition, I can regard only as a covert retreat, a mere transition stage. For if they are of the opinion that 'The First Part of the Contention' and 'The True Tragedie,' were originally the work of some other poet, but that—as described—they had to a great extent been remodelled, improved and augmented by Shakspeare, this very view refutes itself by its incompleteness. Halliwell, it is true, adduces some passages, of which he maintains that they are too bad and too childish to have been written by Shakspeare; in this I perfectly agree with him. But if these passages are supposed not to be corrupt, and if the first unknown author (whose property is supposed to have been taken possession of by Shakspeare) wrote them in the form in which they have come down to us, why has Shakspeare left them as they were? Why did he not correct them? The answer can only be, because he did *not* consider them bad or childish. And if they are so nevertheless, and he did not feel this to be the case, then he deserves the reproach of his work being considered bad and childish, just as much as if he had himself written the passages. In other words, it is a contradiction to declare some passages childish and wholly unworthy of Shakspeare, and yet to assume that Shakspeare remodelled the plays so entirely that they can be regarded as his own. The only possibility of escaping from this contradiction is to adopt the supposition of German criticism, and to assume that the two plays were originally written by Shakspeare, as first experiments in the domain of historical drama, but that the old (pirated) editions give us the plays in a very distorted and mutilated form.

CHAPTER III.

PERICLES.

FROM what has already been said, it is evident that the three parts of 'Henry VI.' as well as 'The First Part of the Contention' and 'The True Tragedie'—the latter conditionally, on account of the corrupt state of their text—must be reckoned among the earliest of Shakspeare's works. Accordingly it is these that have to be taken into consideration in deciding the question as to which of the other plays, published under Shakspeare's name, may be regarded as belonging to his youthful productions. 'Pericles,' in my opinion, is one of these.

This play, in spite of its obvious defects (especially in composition), is now admitted by many English critics* to have probably been a work of Shakspeare's. Even Malone was at first of the same view and had rather ably refuted the opinion of Steevens,† who held 'Pericles' to be an older piece which Shakspeare had merely remodelled. It was only subsequently that Malone adopted the Steevens' view. This however is but an additional proof that Malone, in spite of, or perhaps in consequence of, his great learning, was incapable of giving an impartial and reliable judgment, and that he was also wanting in fine appreciation of the style and the significance of that side of Shakspeare's poetry which was turned towards the Middle Ages. Steevens' arguments‡ are, in reality, more those of a learned philologist than of an æsthetic critic, and unreliable from the very circumstance of his comparing 'Pericles' only with Shakspeare's later masterpieces, entirely overlooking the fact that the play—whether the work of Shakspeare or not—must have

* Drake, Collier, Charles Knight, Richard Grant White, and others.

† Reed's *Shakspeare*, xxi. 412 f.

‡ Reed, *l. c.* 393 f.

been written at a time very far removed from the period of Shakspeare's full maturity. Thus he says: 'Be it first observed that most of the choruses in *Pericles* are written in a measure which Shakspeare has not employed on the same occasion either in *The Winter's Tale*, *Romeo and Juliet*, or in *King Henry the Fifth*.' But he does not consider that the chorus—which is represented by the old poet Gower—has a very different purpose to answer here from that in '*Romeo and Juliet*,' and accordingly had to be differently treated, and that, if Shakspeare in his '*Henry V.*' and '*The Winter's Tale*' had employed it for purposes similar to those in '*Pericles*,' these plays were probably separated from the first appearance of '*Pericles*' by an interval of several decades; accordingly, the different treatment of the chorus proves nothing.

Steevens further observes: 'Very little that can tend with certainty to establish or oppose our author's exclusive right in this dramatic performance, is to be collected from the *dumb-shows*; for he has no such in his other plays, as will serve to direct our judgment. These in *Pericles* are not introduced (in compliance with two ancient customs) at stated periods, or for the sake of adventitious splendour. They do not appear before every act, like those in *Ferrex and Porrex*, they are not like those in Gascoigne's *Jocaster*, merely ostentatious.' These remarks are very true, but again a proof, and moreover a striking, almost irrefutable proof, that the drama was written at a time when dumb-shows were still in vogue, and that Shakspeare, in his finer, artistic tact, felt that pantomime, if it were to continue in use, must no longer be a mere spectacle, but in some way contribute to the development of the action, and be made an integral part of the whole. Steevens also argues that the resemblance, which Malone maintains to exist, between '*Pericles*' and '*The Winter's Tale*' is not at all striking, and, in fact, that no such parallel passages between it and others of Shakspeare's genuine plays could be adduced, as many such cases of resemblance might be found between Shakspeare and other poets (for instance, with Fletcher in his '*Two Noble Kinsmen*'). Steevens thinks that it is only the diction as a whole that can be taken into account, and that it differs

greatly from that of Shakspeare's authenticated works, inasmuch as, for instance, in no play of Shakspeare's do we find so many ellipses. This is again true, but also another proof that Malone was as wrong in appealing to 'The Winter's Tale' in order to defend 'Pericles,' as Steevens was in disputing it by bringing forward some of Shakspeare's later masterpieces. Further, he makes the perfectly correct proposition that 'inequalities and wildness cannot be received as criterions by which we are to distinguish the early pieces of Shakspeare from those which were written at a later period;' but he again forgets that this proposition tells against himself, inasmuch as even in regard to diction he ought not to have placed so much weight upon irregularities. Yet he is right in maintaining that the diction in 'Pericles' differs considerably from that of Shakspeare's earlier works. This is a point which has been specially emphasised by the more recent opponents of 'Pericles' (owing to their better appreciation of the object of criticism) and demands careful consideration, which it shall receive as soon as we have finished with Steevens' arguments. The next reason which he adduces in favour of his view, however, scarcely deserves refutation. The author of 'Pericles,' he thinks, has, in regard to his subject-matter, followed his authority (old Gower in his 'Prince Apolyn') much more carefully than was otherwise Shakspeare's custom, as for instance in his 'As You Like It,' 'Hamlet,' 'King Lear,' etc. This statement is incorrect and wholly devoid of proof, in so far as Shakspeare, in many other of his plays, both of an earlier and a later date, nay, in the majority of his dramas, in all of his historical plays, in 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Othello,' 'Macbeth,' 'All's Well that Ends Well,' 'Much Ado About Nothing,' 'Measure for Measure,' 'The Winter's Tale,' etc., has kept as closely to his authorities as in 'Pericles.'

Accordingly, there remain but two more of Steevens' arguments deserving consideration. In the first place, the circumstance that 'Pericles' is not admitted into the first folio edition of 1623 by Heminge and Condell. In regard to this point, however, Malone and Drake * justly

* *Life and Times of Shakspeare*, ii. 265 f.

draw attention to the fact that Heminge and Condell have also entirely omitted 'Troilus and Cressida,' and did not remember this undoubtedly genuine work of Shakspeare's till after the whole edition, and even the table of contents, had been printed. It is also very possible that, as 'Pericles' had appeared in print several times before the year 1623, Heminge and Condell may not have been able to induce the proprietors of these editions to assign to them the copyright of the play, and were therefore compelled to omit it from their collection. Hence it follows that *the omission of a play in the first folio is no proof of its spuriousness; but neither does it follow, as most English critics think, that the admission of a play by Heminge and Condell is a sufficient guarantee of its genuineness.* For in all cases, and particularly under the circumstances of the time, it was a very different matter to leave out a thing, from confounding one thing with another. Shakspeare's friends could admit into their collection only such plays of which they had obtained the copyright; they might also, owing to the number of scattered plays, have lost sight of one or other, or have omitted it for some special, perhaps accidental and personal reason. But considering how well acquainted they were with Shakspeare's style and with the results of his labours, they could not mistake the works of other writers for his compositions. Accordingly, even this argument proves nothing against 'Pericles,' and moreover, the objection is opposed by other and positive proofs of its genuineness. Not only is the play expressly ascribed to Shakspeare by S. Shephard, in a work that appeared in 1646, and by another less well-known poet, Tatham, in 1652, but Dryden also (in his Prologue to Charles Davenant's tragedy, 'Circe') says of it:

"Shakspeare's own muse his Pericles first bore."

Now Dryden was on intimate terms with Sir William Davenant, the son of the hostess at Oxford (Shakspeare's supposed mistress), who lived in friendly intercourse with Heminge and Condell and others of Shakspeare's associates, and may, as already said, occasionally have given himself out to be a son of Shakspeare's. Therefore I think Dryden's distinct assurance of the authenticity of the

play, deserves to be credited, at least, as long as it is not refuted by better arguments than those of Steevens. At all events, the testimonies adduced clearly prove, as Ch. Knight justly remarks, that according to the annals of the stage 'Pericles,' up to the year 1675, was generally regarded as a work of Shakspeare's.

Lastly, the first quarto edition of 'Pericles' appeared with Shakspeare's *full* name on the title-page, and moreover during the poet's lifetime (in 1609, by H. Goson), a circumstance which indeed does not prove as much in regard to those times as it would in our own day, but which must nevertheless not be left wholly unnoticed. For although the same circumstance might be adduced in the case of three other plays—'A Yorkshire Tragedie,' 'The London Prodigal,' and 'Sir John Oldcastle'—still, as Collier observes, the original title-page of the last-mentioned play was subsequently cancelled, probably at Shakspeare's own request. We are not certain that the same was not done with 'The London Prodigal.' 'A Yorkshire Tragedie,' however, may be Shakspeare's work; at all events, there is as little proof of the contrary, as of the spuriousness of 'Pericles.'

Steevens' last argument applies to the composition and to the characterisation of the play. He says: 'Next be it remarked that the valuable parts of 'Pericles' are more distinguished by their poetical turn than by variety of character, or command over the passions. The drama before us contains no discrimination of manners (except in the comic dialogues) and very few traces of thought—in short, is little more than a string of adventures so numerous, so inartificially crowded together, and so far removed from probability, that, in my private opinion, I must acquit even the irregular and lawless Shakspeare of having constructed the fabrick of the drama; . . . the scenes are rather loosely tacked together, than closely interwoven. We see no more of Antiochus after his first appearance. His anonymous daughter utters but one unintelligible couplet and then vanishes. Simonides, likewise, is lost as soon as the marriage of Thaisa is over; and the punishment of Cleon and his wife, which poetic justice demanded, makes no part of the action, but is related in a kind of

epilogue by Gower. This is at least a practice which in no instance has received the sanction of Shakspeare. From such deficiency of mutual interest and *liaison* among the personages of the drama, I am further strengthened in my belief that our great poet had no share in constructing it.'

The premises of this deduction are again perfectly correct. For in fact the play does fall into a number of scenes that are only externally connected; it wants that organic arrangement, that internal and central point of unity which penetrates all the parts, and alone forms the various parts into an harmonious whole. Life is here not conceived from the centre which determines the circumference, but more from without, that is, peripherically; the drama follows the different turns of the periphery and only touches upon what lies directly in its path. Several of the characters, therefore, are admitted into the action simply from without, and retire as the action advances; in short, the composition is certainly not Shakspearian in the eminent sense of the word—as denoting Shakspeare's masterly style. In like manner the dramatic personages are characterised more from without than from within, that is, more in the mirror of their surroundings and conditions, of their doings and sufferings, than described from their inner nature, their mental life, disposition and feelings. Delineation and colouring are indeed everywhere correct, but there is wanting the depth of conception and the sharpness of individualisation, the full rounding, the grandeur and beauty of the figures. Lastly, the tone and character of the diction corresponds with this—so far as can be judged from the exceedingly corrupt state of the text in the early prints; for although pervaded throughout by a poetical spirit, still, with the exception of a few passages, it lacks Shakspeare's pregnant expressions, his depth of thought, his power in the representation of passion, his grandeur and fullness in the description of emotion. Besides this, the diction appears unequal, in some instances more like Shakspeare's, in others less so, and frequently obscure, involved, rich in ellipses and passages in rhyme; the versification and rhythm unequal, irregular, or treated very carelessly.

It is upon these undeniable defects of the play that the more recent objections to its genuineness are founded, especially the sharp and well-directed attack of my worthy friend Delius.* His view is supported on the authority of A. Dyce, whom very rightly he is inclined to follow, but does so, perhaps, too unconditionally. Dyce's opinion † is that 'the greater part of *Pericles* is undoubtedly by some very inferior dramatist; but here and there, more particularly towards the close, the hand of Shakespeare is plainly seen, and the scenes and shorter passages in which we trace him manifestly belong to his latest style of composition.' Yet in one main point Delius differs from Dyce. For Dyce goes on to say: 'Whether it had ever been acted before it received those vivifying touches from our poet, we cannot determine—perhaps it was as *Pericles* that Alleyn wore the "spangled hoes" mentioned in an inventory of his theatrical apparel (*vide* Collier's Memoirs of Alleyn, p. 21): we at least may be sure that it was originally composed at a period long antecedent to its appearance at the Globe in 1607 or 1608; and we may conjecture that Shakespeare bestowed on it certain additions and improvements for the benefit of that theatre.' Delius, on the other hand, endeavours to prove that it was a 'new' piece at the time, when Shakspeare made the improvements in it—probably on account of the great success it had met with. In this supposition Delius finds his support in the title-page of the earliest quarto of 1609, upon which it is described as 'the late and much-admired play,' etc., and also in the similar title of George Wilkins' novel, 'The Painfull Adventures of Pericles, Prince of Tyre: being the True History of the Play of Pericles, as it was lately presented by the worthy and ancient Poet, John Gower,' ‡ which appeared in print in 1608.

* In the *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Shaks.-Gesellschaft*, iii. 175 ff.

† In his 2nd edition of *Shakspeare's Works*, viii. 3.

‡ Delius in addition appeals to a poem by an unknown author, which appeared in 1609, where occur the following lines:

'As at a new play, all the rooms
Did swarm with gentles and with grooms;
So that I truly thought all these
Came to see Shore or Pericles.'

But *Pericles* is here not mentioned as a new play, at least not expressly

However, these testimonies, as well as the lines quoted in the note, prove only that the play had been recently and frequently performed, and very favourably received, but not that it was originally written in 1607-8. The remark on the title-page of the above-mentioned quarto 'as it hath been divers and sundry times acted by his Maiesties Servants,' is perhaps even meant to intimate that it had not only been frequently performed, but 'divers times;' that, accordingly, it had been previously played by Shakspeare's company.* It seems to me, however, that the very character of the play, the thoroughly undramatic composition, the romantic colouring, and the part ascribed to old J. Gower—who was the first to narrate the story of Pericles in English—sufficiently prove that it cannot possibly have been written at a time when Ben Johnson, Beaumont and Fletcher and their school, had already exercised a decided influence upon the development of dramatic poetry. But it is more particularly the introduction of dumb-shows which, as I think, irrefutably prove that the play must have originally been composed at a time when the old custom had not yet quite come into disuse. What could have induced one of the younger poets, who had perhaps never

but as one that was very popular and filled the house. Besides it is doubtful whether the poem, which appeared in print in 1609, was not written before that date. Malone, at all events, considers the second play referred to by the name *Shore*, as identical with *The Lamentable End of Shore's Wife*, which is a part of the old anonymous *Richard III.*, and connects this allusion with other testimonies so as to make it seem probable that *Pericles* appeared on the boards pretty soon after Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (Reed's *Shakspeare*, ii. 249).

* Phil. Chasles, in his *Études sur Shakspeare*, p. 372, quotes some lines from the old comedy, *The Hog has lost his Pearl*, and from Owen Feltham's *Lusoria*, which speak of 'the unlikely plot' and 'the deep displeasure' of *Pericles*. I have not been able to examine the passages, not having access either to the old comedy or Feltham's work. If the passages are correctly quoted, and if they refer to the reception which *Pericles* met with from the public, they can only apply to a performance of the play before the year 1607-8, and before Shakspeare had made his additions and improvements. For that it met with great applause on its appearance (or re-appearance) in 1607-8, is clearly evident from the above-mentioned testimonies, as well as from the great number of old prints which followed upon one another.

seen a dumb-show, to have again revived this exceedingly undramatic and long-since obsolete custom of forwarding the action? Those who maintain that 'Pericles' appeared first in 1607-8, must at least in some way point out how this remarkable circumstance is to be explained.

Still there can be no doubt that the play in the form we now possess it was first brought upon the stage in 1607-8; and it is equally undoubted—in this I perfectly agree with Dyce and Delius—that it was not till those years that Shakspeare remodelled it, or furnished it with additions and improvements. But, as I think, this was the very reason why it was admitted or re-admitted into the repertoire of the Globe, and why it met with such decided success. The point at issue, accordingly, is only whether at that time it was a new or an old play, and whether, if an old play, it was the work of another poet or one of Shakspeare's own youthful productions. The first alternative I consider as distinctly in favour of the earlier origin of 'Pericles,' as long as the above-demanded explanation of the dumb-shows is not given. As regards the second alternative, I must abide by my former opinion,* that the play was a work of Shakspeare's written in his early youth, and that he subsequently revised and remodelled it. It must be admitted that, taken by itself, it is very improbable that Shakspeare in 1607-8—when the stage possessed an overflowing abundance of dramatic pieces, and Shakspeare's genius was in its fullest maturity and engaged with the composition of his Roman plays—should have condescended to furnish the work of another poet with additions and improvements. However, such a general supposition cannot decide anything. Delius finds the play, as regards composition and characterisation, as well as regards all the several portions that have been left unaltered, so bad, and the differences from Shakspeare's style so important (even when compared with the poet's youthful works), that he is inclined to think that—if right in these two points—it may not be easy to avoid coming to his conclusion.

* Expressed in the second edition of this work.

As regards the first point, Delius, in my opinion, endeavours to prove too much, and hence injures his own case. He thinks that in the first half of the drama (of which, in his opinion, Shakspeare altered but little) there cannot, in fact, be any question about either characterisation or motives for the action, that the figures are 'mere marionettes,' and that the way in which, for instance, 'the Princess Thaisa sets her cap at Pericles, and in which old Simonides, after a most silly trial and without knowing him, urges the Prince of Tyre to become his son-in-law, these portions of the legend, which are childlike and naïve in an epic or novel, become unmeaning absurdities when brought upon the stage in so unmotived a manner.' But if the play in its original form was so utterly wretched, what in the world could have induced Shakspeare, in the full maturity of his judgment, to have spent time and trouble upon so miserable a production? Are we to suppose it to lie in the circumstance that the play, even in its first form, had met with applause? Of this supposed circumstance, however, we know nothing; this much only is certain, that in its present shape, that is, *after* having been remodelled by Shakspeare, it was 'much admired.' And if it had previously been an attractive piece, the remodelling was, of course, superfluous. At all events we have to ask: granted that Shakspeare did undertake the work—which is inconceivable—why did he leave these 'mere marionettes' and 'absurdities' unaltered? For if, as Delius thinks, Shakspeare left the 'structure' of the play untouched, because it was a piece 'well known to the public,' still there was nothing to prevent him from giving better motives for the details of the action, from drawing the figures more correctly, and from giving greater depth to the characters which, in Delius's own opinion, has been done in the second half of the play. I can find no answer except that Shakspeare did *not* consider the figures 'mere marionettes' and senseless absurdities. And, in fact, the conduct of Simonides and of his daughter is not at all so altogether unmotived, so devoid of sense and reason as Delius describes it. Pericles had carried off the prize in the great tournament which was given in honour of the Princess, and had won

the admiration of all by his adroitness, strength, and practice in arms; he had given proofs of his refined culture, and of his talent and skill in music. All this, together with his noble presence, and his chivalrous and graceful conduct had won the daughter's as well as the father's heart. The latter is invariably called 'the good' King Simonides, and is praised for his justice and wisdom; hence it is not surprising that he should acquiesce in his daughter's right and wise choice. And Pericles also, as he subsequently admits, had, on his part, become passionately enamoured of the Princess Thaisa, and doubtless also unintentionally betrayed his feelings but had not ventured to sue for her hand, simply because, as a shipwrecked man, he was not in a position to prove that he was her equal in birth. At all events Pericles himself acts in quite as 'absurd' a manner when, in act v. 1 (hence in the second half of the play, which, according to Delius, is the portion written by Shakspeare), he offers his daughter in marriage to Lysimachus, with whom he has just become acquainted, and of whose life and character he knows as little as of the state of his affections for Marina; his conduct, therefore, is at least quite as 'unmotivated.'

No less incorrect is Delius's assertion that Cleon (act i. 4), in a senseless manner tells his wife of things which she knows as well as he does himself. Cleon does not 'tell' her of the famine in question; he and Dionyza are merely talking about their sad position, about the terribly rapid change between overflowing abundance and abject poverty, and are grieving over the misery which has suddenly come upon them. Just as little does Pericles (in act ii. 1) merely 'repeat' what old Gower (as prologue) has already said about the shipwreck, &c. Pericles calls upon the heavenly powers, upon the sea and the storm not to pursue him farther in their rage, as he is already bereft of all he had, &c. The motives which the poet brings into play to give action and movement to his drama:—the conduct of Thaisa and her father; her sudden resolution to renounce the world (iii. 4), and to become a priestess of Diana; the curious mental condition of Pericles, who, after having heard of his daughter's death, goes on board his ship and, absorbed in a silence which none can induce

him to break, sails about from one place to another; the sudden conversion of Lysimachus through a few words from Marina (iv. 6); the wholly unexpected appearance of Diana (v. 1)—all these features, the greater part of which belong not only to the first, but to the second half of the play (hence to the part supposed to have been written by Shakspeare) correspond perfectly with the semi-epic composition and with the thoroughly romantic basis and colouring of the whole; many parallels of this kind occur in the works of Shakspeare's direct predecessors from the ninth decade—more particularly in the dramas of Robert Greene.

Delius evidently regards the play with antipathy, not to say prejudice, and, as it seems, has from the outset allowed his shrewd, critical judgment to be clouded by the assumption that it was not written till 1607-8. When viewed from this standpoint, and compared with the works of Shakspeare and of his contemporaries belonging to that date, the drama certainly assumes a different aspect.

But if, after what has been said, the substance and subject, the composition, the plot, the tone and character of the play, nevertheless unmistakably point to an earlier date, why need it be supposed to have been written so much later, and, accordingly, not to have been a youthful production of Shakspeare's? Delius answers, because Heminge and Condell have not admitted it into their collection, and because it cannot be assumed that they would forget a drama which had been played on their stage with such continued success as late as 1607-8; further, that they could not have been prevented from reprinting it on account of the old quartos being copyright, for these were obviously mere 'piratical editions' and therefore could hardly have been copyright. Delius also maintains that Dryden's testimony (in the above-quoted line from his prologue to Ch. Davenant's tragedy) is devoid of all power of proof, inasmuch as the idea there expressed could only have been a remark made at random, in explanation and in excuse of the obvious defects of 'Pericles.' But Delius' principal objection is that the language and versification of 'Pericles' has clearly to be separated by a considerable space of time

from the diction and versification of those of Shakspeare's plays which are acknowledged to be his youthful works.

As regards the first two points, Delius should not have omitted to consider that 'Troilus and Cressida,' which has been proved to have appeared even later than 'Pericles' (having been first brought upon the stage in 1609), has nevertheless been omitted by Heminge and Condell. And although such a case of negligence in regard to 'Pericles' would, considering its great popularity, seem very unlikely, still Delius is wrong in supposing that a copyright was not granted to the publishers of the quarto editions of 'Pericles' on account of their obviously being pirated editions. For the publishers even of such editions possessed copyrights; this is undeniably proved by a remark in an entry at Stationers' Hall (quoted on p. 339), where Millington transfers his copyright of the undoubtedly stolen editions of 'The First Part of the Contention' and of 'The True Tragedie,' to the bookseller, Th. Pavier. Delius is also too hasty in rejecting the testimony of Dryden. The passage in the already quoted prologue to Davenant's 'Circe' is as follows:—

'Your Ben and Fletcher, in their first young flight,
Did no Volpone, nor no Arbaces, write;
But hopp'd about, and short excursions made
From bough to bough, as if they were afraid,
And each was guilty of some slighted maid.
Shakspeare's own Muse his Pericles first bore,
The Prince of Tyre was elder than the Moor.
'Tis miracle to see a first good play:
All hawthorns do not bloom on Christmas-day.'

The connection clearly proves that Dryden did not speak at random, in explanation and in excuse of the æsthetic defects of 'Pericles,' but for the purpose of proving that, as B. Jonson's and Fletcher's youthful compositions were no masterpieces, so it was with Shakspeare's, and then appeals to *the fact* that 'Pericles' was one of the first productions of Shakspeare's Muse. If this had not been a well-known and undisputed fact to Dryden and his age, the whole allusion would obviously have no meaning. And if there had existed any doubt, Dryden might simply have referred to 'the Moor,' that is, to 'Titus Andronicus,'

as, of course, this youthful work is likewise not free from 'æsthetic defects.'

The main points of the question, however, are the supposed differences in diction and versification, which Delius maintains are to be found. And he is right in observing that the style of Shakspeare's youthful plays—in contrast to the conciseness and the great wealth of thought in his later diction—is distinguished by greater clearness and perspicuity; and that as regards the versification, we invariably find in his earliest dramas the regular, often monotonously regular cadence of the blank verse which he had adopted from his dramatic predecessors, but subsequently changed into the greatest variety of forms, adapting it to every turn of the dramatic purpose. This generally constitutes the difference of style between Shakspeare's earliest and his latest works, the intermediate ones forming a kind of transition stage.* In single features, however, there occur important exceptions to this rule, both as regards modifications and deviations; in his earliest comedies, for instance (more particularly in 'Love's Labour's Lost'), frequent passages in rhyme and so-called doggerel verses, interrupt the regular flow of the blank verse; further, in several cases we find a freer treatment of the rhythm where the syllables are not so accurately measured and weighed (as in the speech of the Duke and Ægeon's story, in the 'Comedy of Errors,' act i. 1). And yet the language and versification in 'Pericles' show a greater resemblance to Shakspeare's later works than to his earlier ones. However, it is Delius alone who supposes 'Pericles' to fall into two pretty-well defined halves, of which the first half, as well as the plan of the whole, is thought to be the work of a predecessor of Shakspeare's, the second half his own.

Clark and Wright, the editors of the Cambridge Edition, are of a different opinion and consider that 'there can be no doubt that the hand of Shakspeare is traceable in many of the scenes, and that throughout the play he largely retouched and even rewrote the work of some other dramatist.' I, on my part, cannot, as a rule, find any essential difference in the diction and versification of

* This I pointed out in my last edition.

the two halves; and in this alone can I agree with Delius, that Shakspeare, as it seems, showed decided preference for the part of Marina, and perhaps rewrote the whole of it. In *single* features, on the other hand, the first half certainly does show greater irregularities, more obscurity of expression, more ellipses, more passages in rhyme, more lame and rugged lines—in short, more deviations from Shakspeare's style, than is the case with the second half. However, we cannot here, attribute any great importance to single features. For like all other critics, Delius also expressly admits that the manuscript from which the earliest quarto was printed, and subsequently simply reprinted, had been procured by the publisher (H. Gosson) in an illegal manner, and that it was an 'obviously incomplete and very carelessly written manuscript.' However, 'carelessly written' is much too mild an expression for the state in which the text of this quarto and its successors have been handed down to us. From the notes to the Cambridge Edition, which give the original readings and the divisions of the verse, it is evident that an almost incredible confusion prevails in the original text: regular blank verse occurs but as an exception, most of the speeches, which were probably written in blank verse, are printed either as prose, or the lines are divided so at random that they have no resemblance whatever to blank verse. Malone, Steevens, and the later editors have, all in turn, endeavoured to turn them into good or bad blank verse,—no wonder, therefore, that the lines have often turned out lame and rugged. It can now scarcely be conjectured what may have been the original form of the rhythm and versification; in any case, it is more than hazardous to try to decide the question as to the genuineness or spuriousness of the play, from the present condition of the language and versification.

It is self-evident that the substance, the sense, and the expression of ideas have suffered much in the same way as their outward form. And, in fact, together with the undeniable corruptions and omissions in the text, there is, in this respect, such confusion and inequality—in general a sketchy meagreness, occasionally a superfluous wealth of words—that we are again obliged to hesitate, and not allow

our judgment about the general impression to be determined by details. And if, in both respects, the first half shows in single features more deviations from Shakspeare's style than the second, this may have arisen from Shakspeare's having there altered less. It is, however, also possible that the second half was copied or taken down by a better, more attentive, or more skilful short-hand writer or copyist.*

That 'Pericles,' as a whole, generally makes the impression of being a work of Shakspeare's, is confirmed by Delius himself, in so far as he finds a close affinity between it and 'Timon of Athens.' This he, it is true, considers a proof of the spuriousness of 'Pericles;' for, as we have seen, he also considers 'Timon of Athens' to be the work of an inferior poet, which Shakspeare improved or remodelled on a larger scale. However, in my opinion this affinity—even though, as I think, it is not so great as Delius represents—speaks only against him and in my favour. In the first place, it is a contradiction, or at least very inconsistent, when Delius considers it a proof of its spuriousness, that Heminge and Condell have not admitted 'Pericles' into their collection of Shakspeare's works, and, on the other hand, will not trust their testimony in

* Delius considers the frequent rhymes in the first half of the play, and more especially the rhyming couplets in the middle of a speech, with its often inappropriate or trival subject, to be particularly un-Shakspearian. However, such couplets are not at all so wholly unlike Shakspeare; they occur, perhaps not so frequently, but often enough in his earlier plays, especially in his comedies; also in *Richard III.* (i. 1; v. 3, in the utterances of the ghosts) we find a few instances. If we assume that *Pericles* had originally been written as early as 1586-87, it is quite conceivable that Shakspeare might have frequently employed rhymes, which were in general use before the introduction of blank verse, even though he wrote the play in blank verse (with alternate prose for the remarks of the sailors, the pander, etc.). It may be, however, that *Pericles* was not originally written in blank verse, but that it received this dress only in its later remodelling. At all events passages in rhyme and inserted couplets had come into disuse towards 1607-8, and occur as seldom in the younger poets as in Shakspeare's later works. Some of these couplets do certainly appear most awkwardly introduced and lame in form and substance. But who can guarantee that the person who took down the first half of *Pericles* from the mouths of the actors, did not simply take note of the final rhymes, and afterwards fill up the lines as he pleased?

the case of 'Timon of Athens,' which is admitted by them. Delius says: "The sole reason for the non-admission of 'Pericles' into the folio of 1623 can only have been that the publishers were fully aware that Shakspeare had had a very small hand in the composition of the play, that he had neither sketched the plot nor, in the first instance, worked it out, but had only subsequently made additions to the work of some other inferior poet; hence precisely the same, or at least a similar circumstance as that which, I think, can be established in the case of 'Timon of Athens;'"—these words turn their full weight against Delius himself. For it is the supposition only of Delius that Shakspeare made a greater number of alterations and corrections in 'Timon of Athens;' if the general impression be overlooked, and single features taken into consideration, then, I think, as many actual or apparently un-Shaksperian passages, turns, etc., can be adduced against 'Timon of Athens' as against 'Pericles,' and the question is only whether we are for this reason to infer the spuriousness of 'Timon of Athens.' But even granted that Delius is right, still Heminge and Condell would have been no less wrong in including 'Timon of Athens' among Shakspeare's works, had they known for certain that it had originally been written by some other poet—a proceeding which they were equally well aware was entirely opposed to the feelings and character of their deceased friend—as, of course, a few or more corrections cannot either give or take the right to a literary work. The genuineness of 'Timon of Athens' is therefore, I think, so fully proved by the testimony of Heminge and Condell, that so-called internal criticism cannot be taken into consideration, especially when supported upon single features. For we must not forget that to judge of the genuineness or spuriousness of a work from its style and character, is always more or less unsafe, partly because our judgment is based upon mere feeling, what is called the feeling for style, partly because the great masters in art and poetry are not always equal in their works, sometimes strongly influenced by the spirit and character of some other master, sometimes even intentionally working in the style of some other master. If Raffaele's celebrated painting

of the prophet Isaiah (which is worked out in the style of Michel-Angelo) were not authenticated by the surest external evidence, many a connoisseur would have great doubts about its genuineness. And Michel-Angelo's Cupid, which he had buried in an appropriate spot to deceive the enthusiastic admirers of the antique style, was universally regarded as an ancient masterpiece till the artist himself brought forward the arms which he had broken off, and thus proved it to be his own work. The greater, therefore, the affinity between 'Pericles' in its present form, and 'Timon of Athens,' the more indubitable its genuineness becomes.*

* Delius considers that, on account of this affinity, both plays might have been written by one and the same inferior poet. He believes, moreover, that he has discovered this poet in the person of G. Wilkins, the author of the above-mentioned *True History of the Play of Pericles*, which appeared in print in 1608. I fear that Delius will not gain much by this discovery; at least, the reasons which he adduces in favour of his conjecture, I do not find plausible, or even tenable. In the first place, he appeals to the nature of Wilkins' narrative, which he thinks is made up, without any addition of his own, and of almost equal parts, of two different elements sufficiently well known at the time—an old popular book by L. Twine, which appeared in print in 1576, under the title of *The Patterne of painfull Adventures*, etc., (which gives old Gower's story of Pericles) and the play of *Pericles*. Now, Delius argues that as the author of this compilation nevertheless ventures—in the dedication to his patron, Henry Fermor, the magistrate of the county of Middlesex, hence a person of consequence—to call his narrative 'a poore infant of my braine,' the only way by which he could escape being suspected and accused of the most barefaced and undeniable plagiarism would be by supposing one of these parts to have been his own work. However, this argument has no weight, owing to the simple fact that, in those days, the ideas concerning plagiarism and mental property were quite different, much more indefinite and loose, and more favourable to theft than in our own day. But, moreover, even according to our present ideas, there is, in reality, no question about plagiarism in the case of Wilkins. For on the title-page he expressly says that his novel tells the story of the *play of Pericles*, and at the end of the long argument he again refers to his authority by saying: 'Onely intreating the Reader to receive this Historie in the same manner as it was under the habit of ancient Gower, the famous English Poet, by the King's Maesties Players excellently presented.' He who so openly and definitely states the source from which he has drawn, is no plagiarist. No one would accuse Ch. Lamb of being a plagiarist on account of his well-known and popular *Tales from Shakspeare*, although they are more closely allied to Shakspeare's plays than Wilkins's novel. According to Delius, however,

What, on the other hand, was more natural—as I must again repeat—than that young Shakspeare, in his first dramatic attempts, should have followed the method of the best models of his day, and worked in their style? In the present case, it was obviously R. Greene's style that

Wilkins is supposed to refer to *Pericles* only so as expressly to intimate that the play was originally his own. But why, we are forced to ask,—why did not Wilkins have his original poem printed instead of his novel? This would have been a much simpler and more natural means of claiming his property and of exposing Shakspeare the plagiarist! Because, says Delius: 'The play had in the meantime passed over into the possession of the King's Players, and had become quite different in Shakspeare's hands.' 'Quite different!' How does this agree with the trouble which Delius has given himself to prove that the whole of the first half of the play can have been but little, if at all, altered by Shakspeare, and obviously the production of some inferior poet? But even granted that the play became 'quite different' in Shakspeare's hands, and that it became the property of the King's Players in that form, this need not have prevented the robbed author from printing his own drama as he *himself* had written it: no right in the world could have prevented him, for any such right would have been the most crying wrong! Obviously, therefore, Wilkins had no claim to *Pericles* either in its present or in its earlier form, nor even previous to its remodelling by Shakspeare. Moreover, the only extant play of Wilkins—which appeared in print in 1608 under the title of *The Miseries of Inforst Marriage*, etc. (reprinted in Dodsley)—shows that Wilkins could not possibly have been the author of the original *Pericles*. Delius, it is true, finds throughout an affinity in style, metre and dramatic structure, between *The Inforst Marriage*, *Pericles*, and *Timon of Athens*. However, the single features of this affinity, which he adduces in support of his opinion, prove nothing, for reasons already stated. Besides, they can be explained in a much simpler manner by the evidently great trouble which Wilkins has taken—in diction, versification, and other external respects—to approach Shakspeare, whom he perhaps honestly admired (and therefore published his *Pericles* in the form of a novel); but Wilkins could not imitate nor even approach Shakspeare except in his defects and his least excellent works. The whole of his *Inforst Marriage*, when viewed as a whole, is not only an unimportant production, but the coarseness of its substance, its lax morals, its weak as well as repulsive characters—in short, its whole tone is so entirely different from the genius of Shakspeare and his ethical greatness, and so completely follows the style and tendency of the more modern school (described in vol i. p. 289 f.), that it forms the most direct contrast to the strictly moral intention and purely ethical character of Shakspeare's *Pericles* and *Timon of Athens*. A poet who could write *Pericles* and *The Inforst Marriage* in the same period, perhaps in the same year, would be one of the strangest phenomena in the domain of dramatic literature.

he imitated. Like all the plays of this writer, 'Pericles,' also, is not so much a drama as a dramatised narrative; in language, composition, and characterisation, it is thoroughly epic in colouring, and therefore, generally speaking, it is clogged with the same faults as are met with in Greene. And yet Shakspeare surpasses, and doubtless even in his original form, surpassed, his model in many respects. The characters, although wanting in roundness, and more sketches than fully-coloured figures, are nevertheless more powerfully delineated and reveal more of their inner life than those of Greene's best pieces. The composition, also, although externally thoroughly epic, is nevertheless internally held together by the thread of one thought. All the principal parts of the play reflect, either directly or indirectly (by contrast), the same view of life as spent in the search after, and in the acquisition, the loss, and the recovery of its highest gift—pure, genuine love. The fault of the play is that it is more epic than dramatic, for which reason the action, in place of being condensed, hangs loosely together and is flat and diffuse. Even the language and versification, in so far as their original colouring can be conjectured, show, I think, some resemblance to R. Greene's style, except that naturally, in this respect also, Greene was probably as much surpassed in his own style by the superior poetical genius of Shakspeare, as Marlowe was surpassed by 'Titus Andronicus,' which was composed after his fashion. But, in my opinion, it is more especially the comic parts (for instance, the scenes among the fishermen, and between Boulton and his mistress, etc.) that show such great resemblance to passages in 'The Comedy of Errors,' 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona,' 'Henry VI.' (Jack Cade, etc.), and 'Romeo and Juliet' (the disputes of the servants), that not only do they quite eclipse all the comic parts in Greene's dramas, but must necessarily have been written by Shakspeare, and moreover by Shakspeare as a young, not as an older man.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ARRAIGNMENT OF PARIS. SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE. THE MERRY DEVIL OF EDMONTON. THE FAIR EM. MUCEDORUS. THE LONDON PRODIGAL. THE PURITAN. THE HISTORY OF KING STEPHAN. THE DUKE HUMPHREY.

BEFORE proceeding to apply the standard furnished by 'Pericles,' 'Titus Andronicus,' 'Henry VI.' and the comedies mentioned at the end of our last chapter, to the criticism of the earlier plays the genuineness of which is really doubtful, we must first strike off the list those of which it is clear, from internal as well as external evidence, that Shakspeare had no hand in their composition. These are :

1. *The Arraignment of Paris*, a play which has been discussed in our first volume, p. 131 f., and was in 1660 ascribed to Shakspeare by the booksellers Kirkman and Winstanley; but, according to the express testimony of Nash, in his 'Epistle to the Gentlemen Students of both Universities,' prefixed to R. Greene's 'Arcadia,' was a work of Peele's. Opposed to testimony of such weight, the inner nature of the piece itself would prove nothing, even granted—which however is far from being the case—that its inner nature would justify our ascribing it to Shakspeare.

2. *Sir John Oldcastle*,* although published in 1600 by the bookseller, T. P. (Thomas Pavier), with Shakspeare's name in full on the title-page, is nevertheless assuredly not written by him. For in several entries in Henslowe's Diary † (in October, November, and December, 1599), the authors of the play are expressly said to be Monday,

* Reprinted in the *Supplement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays*, published in 1778 by S. Johnson and G. Steevens. London, 1780; ii. 265 ff.

† Henslowe's *Diary*, pp. 158, 162, 166, 236 f.

Drayton, Wilson and Hathaway; moreover, as already remarked, Pavier was subsequently compelled to cancel Shakspeare's name on the original title-page. Yet Tieck * appears to consider it a work of Shakspeare's, at least he has admitted it in his translation of four of Shakspeare's plays, without a word of explanation.

Tieck's opinion, although often very justly doubted in matters of criticism, is always deserving of consideration. Therefore, let us examine the character of the play somewhat more closely. In the first place, it is very important to observe that the piece must have been written after the appearance of Shakspeare's 'Henry IV.' This is clearly evident from the prologue and several passages in the play itself, where allusion is made to Falstaff, Poins, and Peto, to the merry life led by Prince Henry, his thefts, etc. This agrees perfectly with the entry in Henslowe's diary, according to which the play was first acted in 1599, and paid for as a new piece. If, therefore, the play was written in 1598, I must honestly confess that it is to me inconceivable how, for a moment, it can be regarded as a work of Shakspeare's. The invention, the diction, the characterisation, and the composition and a number of details,—in short, no less than everything, speaks decisively against such a supposition. I shall merely direct attention to a few points. In the first place, what could have induced Shakspeare so utterly to destroy his own representation of the character of Henry V., so diametrically to contradict himself, and to describe the *king*—whom, from the very first, he made so royal in appearance—as quite the reverse, not only as delighting in the remembrance of his youthful excesses, but also as playing at dice in disguise with the most worthless and lowest of characters! Further, how is it possible to assume that Shakspeare, when at the very meridian of his poetical career, should have published a drama in which several entirely different actions are so badly patched together, that inwardly the whole falls to pieces! What, for instance, in its significance, has the story of Lord Powis to do with the conspiracy of the Earl of Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey, and the latter with the fortunes of Sir

* *Vier Schauspiele von Shakspeare*, Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1836.

John Oldcastle and the rash rebellion of Acton, Beverley and Murley! A number of secondary personages, such as Lord Herbert and Sir Richard Lee, the Irishman, and Sir John Wrotham with his Dolly, the Duke of Suffolk, the Earl of Huntingdon, and Butler, Chartres, Cromer, the Judges, the Mayor, the Bailiff, the Host, etc., are mere dummies; these are hardly interwoven with the action externally, and render it necessary to introduce a number of scenes the poetical significance of which, when closely examined, is reduced to nothing. The principal characters are, indeed, generally speaking, correctly drawn, but are nevertheless quite wanting in that fulness and roundness, that inward depth, that ease of movement and progressive development which distinguish Shakspeare's figures. In like manner the language is flowing and suitable, the dialogue animated and unconstrained, but devoid of elevation, poor in thought as well as in poetic imagery—accordingly, although usually free from long speeches, it is nevertheless flat and tame, at all events, very different from the poetic dignity, the solidity and fullness, as well as from the historical brevity and energy of the diction in 'Richard II.,' 'Henry IV.,' etc. Lastly, the comic scenes specially—for instance, between the Summoner, Harpool, Sir John of Wrotham, Dolly, etc., or between Acton, Boure, Beverley and Murley—not only have not the slightest bearing upon the proper action of the play, but are, for the most part, so low and spiritless, that not a spark of Shakspeare's 'facetious grace' is to be discovered in them. The whole betrays a poet who, it is true, endeavoured to form himself upon Shakspeare's masterpieces, nay, even to imitate him, but who stood far below him in genius and talent.

3. *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* * is a comedy that has been ascribed to Shakspeare simply because it was found bound up with two other pieces in one volume on the back of which was printed *Shakspeare*, vol. i.†

Upon the authority of the bookbinder, Kirkman the

* Reprinted in the latest edition of Dodsley's *Old Plays*, 1825, vol. v.

† The volume formerly belonged to Charles the Second, and afterwards came into the possession of Garrick.

bookseller affixed Shakspeare's name to the play in his catalogue, whereas Thomas Coxeter (according to Knight, 'a laborious antiquary,' who died in 1747) and Oldys maintain it to have been a work of Michel Drayton's. However, under the date of April 5th, 1608, we have the following entry on the Stationers' register: *Joseph Huntard, Thom. Archer* (the publishers): *A book called the Lyfe and Deathe of the Merry Devill of Edmonton, with the pleasant pranks of Smugge the Shmyth, Sir John and mine Hoste of the George, about their stealing of Venison. By T. B.* From the express mention of the comic characters, it is clear that this is the same play which Tieck* likewise maintains to be a work of Shakspeare's, but it is as evident that the additional remark, *By T. B.*, is meant to intimate the name of the author. The play is, I think, better than 'Sir John Oldcastle;' Charles Lamb even speaks of it with a warmth of admiration, and Knight,† although considering this praise 'as carried a little too far,' willingly admits its value. In so far it might not be impossible to regard it as one of Shakspeare's youthful works; but in the 'Blacke Booke, by T. M.‡' (which was printed in 1604), it is mentioned together with Thomas Heywood's 'A Woman Killed with Kindness,' and moreover in such a manner as to convey the impression that both plays were then quite new and great favourites with the multitude—which is an established fact as regards Heywood's 'A Woman Killed with Kindness.'§ This circumstance alone might justify the conjecture that 'The Merry Devil of Edmonton' was also a work of Heywood's, and that, by a misprint in the Stationers' register, B. stands for H., particularly as the play shows the closest affinity to Heywood's style, and as there is no eminent poet of the period known by the initials T. B. At any rate, all possibility of its being a work of Shakspeare's vanishes, if it appeared as late as 1602 and 1604. For, in spite of its many excellences, it is much too bad to be one of Shakspeare's *maturer* works from the best period of his poetical

* *Altenglisches Theater*, vol. ii.

† *Studies of Shakspeare*, p. 288 f.

‡ Steevens in *Reed's Shaks.*, ii. 129.

§ Collier, *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, iii. 77.

career. Apart from the differences in tone, colouring and language which distinctly bear witness against its being Shakspeare's, the comic scenes, although better than those in 'Sir John Oldcastle,' are nevertheless not in the least Shakspearian. The wit is more the wit of the multitude, quite in the spirit of such a writer as Heywood, but for that very reason wholly wanting in Shakspeare's fine irony and his deep latent humour. The action, it is true, is developed with great ease and a graceful movement, the scenes are well arranged and run smoothly into one another, but there is no trace of that living, internal unity and harmony such as we have in Shakspeare's works.

The story of Fabel and his compact with the devil, stand quite apart and altogether outside of the real action, and the love-intrigue between Millisent and young Mounchensey is only externally and very loosely connected with the poaching adventures of the priest, the host, the smith, and the miller; these personages and their doings stand internally in no sort of connection with the main action, and are, therefore, in reality quite superfluous. It is the same with the language and characterisation. Both give proof of the poet's talent in writing good and pleasing poetry for the multitude. But Shakspeare's genius, which possessed the power of closely blending the light and popular with the loftiest and gravest, could not—at least in the year 1600—have written merely to please the multitude. 'The Merry Devil of Edmonton' is clearly the work of a poet of the Shakspearian School, and formed under Shakspeare's influence; it was evidently meant to be a fantastic comedy in Shakspeare's style. Now the fantastic style is, of all species of comedy, the most difficult; it demands the greatest depth and truth of poetic intuition, and of this the otherwise talented author possessed little. In short, the play is certainly not Shakspeare's.

To these plays, the spuriousness of which is abundantly proved by external evidence, I shall add two others which are scarcely supported by external reasons, and must at once be rejected on account of all internal evidence: *The Fair Em.* and *Mucedorus*.

These are the two plays that are bound up in the same volume with 'The Merry Devil of Edmonton,' and ascribed by the bookbinder to Shakspeare. Tieck * defends *The Fair Em.* as a work of Shakspeare's, by the remark that: 'The evidence of the bookbinder, whoever he may have been, cannot be unconditionally rejected, for it, at all events, belongs to a period in which Shakspeare's name was esteemed less than that of Fletcher's. Moreover, the owner of the book certainly cannot have intended the title to deceive anyone but himself. Further, Shakspeare most probably came to London earlier than is generally assumed. If he had been there as early as 1584-85, and if necessity or inclination had induced him to write for the stage without giving his name, then this sketch—which has no pretension to characterisation, language or invention—is perhaps the production of a young man, who, without preparation or learning, and apparently without a poet's vocation, gave the theatre a mere shadow-play, without life or substance; . . . it is simply too bad and insignificant to be a work of Marlowe's or Greene's, to whom the play has been ascribed by many, for, although the first scene and the introduction possess a certain resemblance to "Friar Bacon," still it has nothing of the poetical spirit, or the ease and grace of that old poem.'

Tieck can scarcely have himself found these reasons conclusive. For he admits that the play is not good enough to be a work of Greene's—who, as is well-known, produced a good deal of small ware—that it has no pretension to characterisation, language or invention. If, therefore, according to his own opinion, the play has not the faintest resemblance to Shakspeare's style, but even separated by a wide gulf from 'Pericles' and 'Titus Andronicus,' then all that could speak in favour of its being Shakspeare's work is, in fact, reduced to the testimony of the title given by the bookbinder. How weak such evidence is, has been sufficiently proved in the case of 'The Merry Devil of Edmonton.' The play may certainly have been written by a young man who, without either learning or preparation, and probably without a poet's vocation, had devoted himself to the stage from

* Preface to his *Vorschule Shakspeare's*, ii. p. 7.

inclination or necessity; but why this youth should be Shakspeare, is decidedly not easy to see. What is very probable is, that the owner of the book had Shakspeare's name put upon it simply because he lived in an age in which Shakspeare's name was held in much lower estimation than Fletcher's or Ben Jonson's. The owner of the book may, for instance, have known nothing of Shakspeare, or at least have known him only superficially (perhaps through the spectacles of Tateham, who in 1652 called Shakspeare 'the plebeian driller'); but, being struck by the very general external resemblance of the three plays among one another, and by the dramatic style of the Shakspearian age, and also for the sake of a title, he ascribed them to the poet whose name was best known to the age in which they were printed.

This hypothesis has, at all events, as much foundation as any other. If, accordingly, the title given by the bookbinder proves nothing, it would but little alter the case to admit that Shakspeare arrived in London as early as 1584-85, and that he came forward immediately as a dramatic poet. For Shakspeare, even at twenty years of age, must surely have possessed some poetical talent, and of this—as Tieck himself admits—there is no trace in the work.

Lastly, among those plays which, as I think, are undoubtedly spurious, is, *The London Prodigal*. Of this play* the only extant earlier edition had appeared in 1605, and has Shakspeare's name in full on the title-page. Otherwise, however, we know nothing of the piece, as it is not mentioned either in Henslowe's Diary or in the Stationers' registers. And if we knew as little about the impudence which induced the publisher or printer of the above edition to declare Shakspeare to be the author, I am convinced that it would never have occurred to anyone to ascribe it to Shakspeare. In the first place, it cannot be one of his youthful works. The author displays too much acquaintance with the stage, too much knowledge and experience of life, for a young poet; the language also betrays a practised writer who found it a

* In the *Supplement* to Johnson and Steevens' edition of *Shakspeare's Plays*, ii. 449 f.

simple task to dramatise the subject. Malone maintains, very justly, I think, that, to judge from a passage in the first act, it must have been written in 1603 or 1604. It cannot have been one of Shakspeare's later works, for it is far inferior in poetic character and artistic merit to either 'Pericles' or 'Titus Andronicus.' Taken as a whole it is little better than 'Sir John Oldcastle,' with which it has so much affinity, both internal and external, that it may perhaps belong to one of the four above-mentioned poets (Monday, Drayton, Wilson or Hathaway), but at all events to the popular school *par excellence*, of which Heywood may be called the head. It is precisely in the spirit of this school (which, after Shakspeare's appearance, unquestionably took his masterpieces as its models) that we here find a correct, lifelike, but light and superficial delineation of character. The versification and language are flowing and clever, but wanting in power and elevation, poor in thought, and meagre in the expression of emotion and passion. In like manner the scenes change in a measured and graceful movement, but the action runs more upon the thread of an external story; it does not rise naturally from the depths of the feelings, from the fundamental dispositions of the characters; the personages act more from outward than from inward motives. Luce, for instance, sacrifices herself simply because she is the wife—even though contrary to her wish—of her worthless husband, and the latter, the Prodigal, suddenly becomes a reformed character because of the self-sacrificing devotion of his wife.

Again, the comic element is quite external, and consists merely of the patois of a Devonshire clothier, of the sneers and jokes made by the servants, and, it may be, of the naïve silliness of Civet and his young wife. Of that inward play of humour and irony which prevails in all Shakspeare's comedies, and gives them their deep significance, the author of the present play has no conception.—I have taken so much trouble to bring to light Shakspeare's peculiarity in this respect, that I think I may claim the right to lay special stress upon this point in a critical examination of works supposed to be written by Shakspeare, at all events more than upon all other details,

which almost any writer of ordinary talent can, to a certain extent, imitate. A poet's style of composition rests pre-eminently and directly upon his poetical view of life, and this no one can simply appropriate to himself. Now, in the present case, as in 'Sir John Oldcastle,' we indeed meet with Shakspeare's custom of allowing several actions and several groups of figures to advance simultaneously. But these different circles are not, as in Shakspeare, internally, organically connected with one another, they are hardly linked together externally, mechanically; the story of the Prodigal has not the faintest connection with the love affairs of Bisam, Oliver, and Sir Arthur. These characters, as well as Mr. Weathercock, Delia, etc., are mere secondary personages, without any poetical significance. The play is divided into a dramatic action and a number of quite unimportant incidents, into dramatic characters and mere dummies, and therefore in reality falls to pieces. Hence we everywhere find the same superficiality into which popular writers so readily fall when aiming exclusively at momentary effect.

As regards the two plays: *The Puritan, or the Widow of Watling Street* *—which is entered at Stationers' Hall under the date of the 6th of August, 1601, and was printed in the same year with Shakspeare's initials, W. S. (perhaps Wentworth Smith)—and *The History of King Stephan*, which does not even possess the authority of these initials, I may spare myself the trouble of proving their spuriousness, since no one but booksellers and compilers of catalogues have ascribed them to Shakspeare. *The Duke Humphrey, a Tragedy*, which even Drake mentions among the spurious plays, is most probably the second part of Shakspeare's 'Henry VI.'

* *Supplement* to Johnson and Steevens' edition, l. c. ii. 533 ff.

CHAPTER V.

LOCRINE. THE TROUBLESOME REIGN OF KING JOHN. ARDEN
OF FEVERSHAM. THE LIFE AND DEATH OF THE LORD
CROMWELL.

OF the really doubtful plays the oldest is perhaps *The Lamentable Tragedie of Locrine, the eldest Son of King Brutus, etc.* It is, indeed, not mentioned in the books of the Stationers' Company till July 20th, 1594, and was printed by Thomas Creede in 1595. But even the remark on the title-page: 'As newly set foorth, overseene and corrected by W. S.'—from which it has been inferred that Shakspeare was the author of the play—proves that it was an older piece that was then revived. This is also evident from several passages which are written throughout in rhyme, and again from the strong colours used in describing the warlike, patriotic spirit which pervades the play, and from the evident allusions to the events of the years 1586-88, when England was dreading the intrigues of Mary Queen of Scots, and was threatened by the Spanish Armada. Hence the play may have first appeared in those years.

Tieck * gives a translation of it in his 'Early English Theatre,' and pronounces it to be a youthful work of Shakspeare's. He thinks that it contains, in embryo, most of Shakspeare's later plays, and that a searching eye must everywhere recognise his genius; further, that it distinctly bears witness to his predilection for the bizarre and the gigantesque, nay, that most of the speeches merely repeat the tone given by rude Pyrrhus in 'Hamlet' (a tirade which is undoubtedly taken from one of the poet's earlier plays); that, accordingly, when England was again in dread of a Spanish Armada, Shakspeare, in 1595, merely republished it with additions and improve-

* *Alt-Englisches Theater.*

ments. But, even though the correctness of these remarks could not be doubted—and I, on my part, do partly doubt them—still they do not seem to me sufficiently strong to refute the statement on the title-page of the old edition, according to which the play was simply revised and corrected by Shakspeare. Some of its principal motives, for instance, the division of the kingdom by a dying father, the appearance of ghosts, a family quarrel, etc., are, it is true, met with in Shakspeare's later works; some of the characters also—such as Humber, Albanact, Estrild—remind us of 'Titus Andronicus.' But general motives, such as these are of frequent occurrence in the dramatic poetry of that day, and the outward nature of the characters, the bizarre and the gigantesque have more the appearance of Marlowe's style than Shakspeare's. To pretend to recognise Shakspeare's mind in 'Lochrine,' can, we presume, only mean that the tone and spirit of the play are found to accord with Shakspeare's character. And as to the moral earnestness and the enthusiastic patriotism which is the soul of the piece, the feelings of every honourable Englishman in 1586–88 would doubtless have agreed on these points. For these were, generally speaking, the sentiments of the whole nation.

Again, the resemblance of most of the speeches with the coarse language of Pyrrhus, seems to speak more against than in favour of Tieck's opinion. For Shakspeare has nowhere, not even in prologues or epilogues, presumed to give his own works the smallest praise; hence it is scarcely likely that the lines in 'Hamlet' can have been from a work of Shakspeare's, and moreover, do not show any affinity to the versification and diction of those of his earliest plays which are acknowledged to be genuine. Now, if this supposition has to be given up, it must also be admitted that the diction of 'Lochrine' does not look very like Shakspeare's. In the first place, it is much heavier, more diffuse and tedious than in 'Titus Andronicus' and 'Henry VI.,' and yet, on the other hand, does not possess the mystic grace and tenderness of 'Pericles.' Further, although the subject shows great resemblance to that of 'Titus Andronicus,' still the expression of feelings, of passion and emotion, is poorer and

much less powerful. It wants the wild grandeur which carries the poet himself along with it, and which we might suppose would have been the case with *young* Shakspeare when treating such a subject; the language is too choice, too artificial, and too much adorned with grand epithets and imagery. The frequent indulgence in reflections by the dramatic personages, as well as in the prologues to the several acts betray an older poet with more command over his subject—quite a contrast to the youthful colouring pervading ‘Titus Andronicus.’ This circumstance is therefore of special importance, as both plays must have been written much about the same time, ‘Locrine’ perhaps even later, after the defeat of the Armada (1588).

Lastly. I cannot discover in ‘Locrine’ any of Shakspeare’s fine appreciation for the beauty of dramatic form. The subject is here not of an epic nature, and the want can therefore not be excused on account of the epic style which Shakspeare followed in ‘Pericles.’ In fact, as in ‘Titus Andronicus,’ the subject here was very well adapted for that organic and truly dramatic roundness of form, which Shakspeare had even aimed at in ‘Titus Andronicus.’ And yet the author of ‘Locrine’ evidently had no idea of Shakspeare’s peculiar style of composition, which is centred in and proceeds from his peculiar view of life (to which we have often alluded). The scene of the death of Brutus, nay, the whole first act is a mere prologue; it belongs to the past, and therefore stands wholly apart from the dramatic (present) action. The latter does not begin till the second act, and this immediately gives rise to an internal division of the subject; on the one hand we have the story of Humber, Hubba, and Estrild, on the other the story of Locrine, of his wife, brother, and uncle. Both groups come into outward contact only by means of purely factitious incidents; they do not move concentrically round one common point. The story of Humber has quite a different significance from that of Locrine’s doings and sufferings. Hubba and Albanact are *mere* supernumeraries, who enter and then leave the action from wholly external motives. On all sides we miss the lifelike ideal connection of the deeds and the characters among one another, and the organic contrasts which are

found in 'Titus Andronicus,' and even in 'Pericles.' In all these points, therefore, I cannot see anything of Shakspeare's genius.

The comic parts alone form an exception. The story of Strumbo, with his two wives, is, in the first place, a kind of humorous counterpart to the life and doings of Locrine, that is, it stands in an ideal connection with the main action in Shakspeare's usual manner. Individual features of the comic parts also, are, both in spirit and form, more in Shakspeare's style, and show more affinity to the comic scenes in 'Pericles,' 'Henry VI.,' 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona,' etc. In these parts I do find something of Shakspeare's 'facetious grace,' at least it seems to me scarcely to be doubted that the comic and tragic actions were written by different authors. Hence if Shakspeare had any hand in the play, then, as I think, it was the comic parts alone which were his work, wholly or for the most part his own invention, or, at all events, remodelled and corrected by him. Whether, however, the piece is one of those, in regard to which Greene accused young Shakspeare of having decked himself in the feathers of others, and whether, therefore, it was originally a work of G. Peele's—which might be inferred from the choice and elaborate diction—or one of Marlowe's—to which its above-mentioned peculiarities seem to indicate—are points which I do not venture to decide. This much only seems to be certain, that the initials W. S. on the title-page of the old edition cannot have stood for Wentworth Smith (as Malone thought), or for anyone else but Shakspeare, for the simple reason that, according to all we know of this initial-kinsman of Shakspeare's, his poetical career did not begin till ten years after the appearance of 'Locrine.'* However, the comic parts are too poor and unsafe a criterion to determine the question as to whether Shakspeare did or did not make corrections in the play.—

Immediately connected with 'Locrine' is the older 'King John,' or, according to its full title, *The Trouble-*

* In Henslowe's *Diary* he is first mentioned in 1599 as the author of *The Italian Tragedy*, etc. (*Vide Collier's History of English Dramatic Poetry*, iii. 98.)

some Reigne of John, King of England,* because, in the first place, the play appeared about the same time as 'Locrine.' Its two parts, which were printed for the bookseller Sampson Clarke, did not appear till 1591, and did not give the author's name; yet the play must have been written about the time of the war with Spain, or, at least, soon after the defeat of the Armada (1588). This is clearly evident from the fanatical zeal against the Papists, as well as from the fierce patriotic and warlike spirit which pervades the whole play, together with the many allusions to foreign invasions and to the victorious power of England when at peace with herself. Moreover, in the first part there are very many passages in rhyme; they occur also in the second part, although not so frequently, perhaps—as Collier conjectures—because they were here partly discarded upon a later remodelling.

The play has been ascribed to Shakspeare because his name is intimated on the title-page of a later edition (printed for the bookseller, J. Helme, in 1611) by the initials W. Sh., and given in full in the following edition of 1622 (for Th. Dewe). English critics are, however, almost unanimous in considering the play too bad to have even a partial claim to the name of Shakspeare, and, accordingly, that we here again have an instance of a bookseller's fraud; Steevens alone was at first inclined to regard it as genuine. Schlegel, on the other hand, maintains that it can be made very probable that the play was written by Shakspeare, and Tieck,† without hesitation, declares it to be one of the poet's youthful productions. He says that the composition, the characters, nay, that every line bears so decidedly the stamp of Shakspeare's writing, that it is ridiculous of English critics blindly to ascribe it to R. Greene, Marlowe, or any other writer, simply because they think it utterly wretched and unworthy of Shakspeare. I, on my part, cannot unconditionally agree with either verdict. Both seem to me to go too far; for that 'every line' bears the stamp of Shakspeare's style must as distinctly be denied, as that the

* Steevens, *Six Old Plays*, etc., ii. 1 ff.

† *Alt-Englisches Theater*, i. p. 16.

piece is throughout too bad to be allowed to bear the name even of young Shakspeare.

However, it does not follow that the play was actually written by young Shakspeare, or that it was corrected by him. Entirely his, in my opinion, it certainly is not. For the comic parts—for instance, the scenes between Phil. Faulconbridge and the monks and nuns—appear to me so full of coarseness and vulgarity, that I cannot find in them anything of Shakspeare's 'facetious grace.' If Shakspeare could have written such scenes he would have contrived to ennoble the indelicacy by wit and humour, but of this there is no trace; the fountain of his wit which gushes forth even in 'Pericles' and 'Henry VI.,' and of course more abundantly in his earliest comedies, seems here to be quite dried up. The comic element consists merely of bare facts, and these facts are mere coarse pasquinades. It is in vain to urge that the poet has allowed himself to be carried away by the prevailing popular feeling, and that he has made a sacrifice to popular wit; for in the present case there is no question even of popular wit, and we have abundant proof in Shakspeare's above-mentioned youthful compositions, of how well, even as a young poet, he understood how to make use of true popular wit. Besides this, the comic parts in the older 'King John' are distinguished by short rhyming lines, and by a style of language which has not the faintest resemblance to that of any one of Shakspeare's plays. In like manner the long scene at the shrine of St. Edmund's, and, at the end of the second part, the scene between the monks and the abbot—which is so like the one found fault with above—are so decidedly un-Shakspearian, that there can be no question even of alterations or corrections by Shakspeare's hand, much less of their being Shakspeare's own composition.

On the other hand, one might be inclined, and I myself was formerly inclined, to consider some other portions of the piece, if not as Shakspeare's sole property, still as partly belonging to him. For some scenes—for instance, in the first part of the passage where Phil. Faulconbridge declares that he prefers being the bastard of Richard Cœur de Lion, than the legitimate son of old Faulconbridge,

and again the scene between Hubert and Prince Arthur, between King John, the prophet of Pomphret, Phil. Faulconbridge, etc., as well as John's several soliloquies—are, in my opinion, so truly poetic that, generally speaking, they show in spirit and character tolerable resemblance to Shakspeare's *youthful* works. The characterisation also is not unworthy of young Shakspeare. This is evident even from the fact that the fundamental features in the character of King John, of Faulconbridge, of Hubert and most of the secondary figures, have been retained by Shakspeare in his undoubtedly genuine play of 'King John,' and that he has merely softened the much rougher outlines and the glaring colours, given the characters more depth, a fuller and richer mental life, made the motives of their actions more definite, and more strongly emphasised the contrasts between them. In like manner, the composition in all essential points presents precisely the same form which the subject afterwards received in Shakspeare's hands.

Accordingly, were I to analyse the plan and fundamental idea of the play any closer, I should merely be repeating what I have already said when discussing Shakspeare's 'King John;' for in this respect Shakspeare has made scarcely any alterations. He has not only invariably adopted the whole plan of the piece, the course of the action, and the succession of the scenes, but the intention, the leading motives, the conception of the ideal nucleus, and the general significance of the historical events represented, are essentially the same, except that they are more clearly brought forward and more profoundly conceived. It is evident, therefore, that Shakspeare judged the older play more favourably than its English critics.

Lastly, as regards the language, Malone* endeavours, it is true, to point out that it shows the greatest affinity to the diction of the second and third parts of 'Henry VI.,' and that, accordingly, both plays must belong to the same author; he lays special stress on this point because, as he thinks, it is at the same time a clear proof of the spuriousness of 'Henry VI.' If he were right, his argument would obviously decide in favour of the older 'King John,'

* In Reed's *Shakspeare*, xiv. 258 f.

inasmuch as Shakspeare's claim to 'Henry VI.' cannot, I think, be any longer doubted. But his prejudice against 'Henry VI.,' his endeavour to prove its spuriousness has, in this case, obviously clouded his judgment; outward resemblances have caused him to overlook the total absence of internal affinity in style. In the monotony and stiffness of the regularity of the versification—which young Shakspeare employed in his historical plays (much less in his comedies), and moreover not only in 'Henry VI.,' but also in 'Richard III.' and 'King John'—the older 'King John' certainly shows some similarity with the treatment of the verse in Shakspeare's youthful works, although even in this respect differences will become manifest to those whose feeling for style is more thoroughly cultivated. But, on the other hand, the diction of the older 'King John' shows so little affinity to the style either of young or of old Shakspeare, that it constitutes the chief argument against Shakspeare's being the author of the play. For it is invariably unfanciful in expression, poor in its general ideas (so-called sententious sayings); there is an absence of warmth of feeling as well as of acuteness and wealth of reflexion; further it has a tendency to artificial rhetoric (as in the scene between Hubert and Arthur), which is intended to compensate for and to conceal the coldness and want of elevation in the expression of feeling and emotion, and this goes hand in hand with a skilfulness in the dialogue and the formal dramatisation of the subject which has obviously been acquired by long practice and betrays an older and somewhat experienced dramatist. This difference in the language, even though occasionally less prominent, is distinctly enough apparent in every part of the piece, so that it cannot well be assumed that Shakspeare even remodelled or corrected individual passages.*—

* The question as to who was the author of the older *King John*, I do not venture to answer, on account of the uncertainty of a criticism based on purely internal evidence. However, Von Friesen's conjecture—which he has communicated to me by letter—that it may have been written by G. Peele in conjunction with R. Greene, seems to me extremely plausible. Von Friesen, in all essential points, agrees with my present opinion of the play.

The next play to be discussed is *Arden of Feversham*. This is a domestic tragedy, and is entered at Stationers' Hall under the date of April 3rd, 1592 (again in 1599 and 1633, but in all cases without the name of the author). Its claim to genuineness is not supported by any external evidence, for the first to ascribe it to Shakspeare was Edward Jacob, a bookseller of Feversham, in a reprint of the play issued by him in the year 1770, and his reason for so doing was on account of some unimportant parallel passages. Still, in my opinion, the question as to whether it may be a youthful production of Shakspeare's, cannot be decided in the off-hand manner with which English critics have treated the matter.

Tieck * enters at length into the criticism of the piece, and, upon the whole, I concur with the praise he awards to it. But even his criticism is one-sided, inasmuch as he does not mention the defects of the play, which are far from being confined merely to some smaller or greater excrescences, to exaggerated expressions and lame verses. In the first place, as regards the language, although generally poetic, it is too frosty, slow, broad, and monotonous for Shakspeare's warmth of sentiment and overflowing fulness of genius; again, it is often too choice, the form artificial in its grandeur—in fact, too beautiful for the meagre substance, so that it occasionally reminds one of G. Peele, the *artifex verborum*. The delineation of the characters is indeed, generally speaking, true and life-like; some of the figures, however (such as Franklin, the Painter, and Susan), are very much too insipid, vague, and ill-defined, whereas others are now and again inconsistent. For instance, Michael, Arden's servant, who, on one occasion, concocts a most confused and ludicrously stupid love-letter, soon afterwards (iii. 1) describes his anxiety of mind in very refined, almost exalted language; Black Will also, a vulgar ruffian, at times speaks very much in the same tone as the sententious Franklin. This is quite contrary to Shakspeare's art, which sharply distinguishes the characters not only in nature but also in form, a style of art which is even distinctly apparent in 'Pericles' and 'Henry VI.' In like manner the com-

* *Vorschule Shakspeare's*, i. 21 f.

position corresponds more with the style of the earlier school than with Shakspeare's, that is to say, it proceeds in a straight line, without rounding and complication: one attempt to commit the murder is succeeded by another; mere external accidents, devoid of ideal significance, invariably thwart the execution of an act which was determined upon in the very first scene. This one deed is, so to say, in the throes of birth throughout four entire acts; it forms the sole substance of the whole action; no wonder, therefore, that the representation in the end becomes tiresome. There is, moreover, not even an adequate motive for the unnatural deed: Arden is murdered without having in any way been guilty—at all events, the poetical justice which is supposed to be saved by the representation of his wrong against Richard Reed, comes in very lame; Alice, a lady of high birth, whom the noble Arden loved, and still loves, conspires against his life, owing to a low and guilty passion, which is presented to us fully developed, without its growth being accounted for by her own character, or even by outward circumstances. The play is wholly wanting in a fundamental idea, a general view of life; in fact, we have but the representation of this one crime, committed by these few definite personages, surrounded by a host of wholly unimportant secondary characters—such as Lord Cheinie, the landlord, the goldsmith, the sailor and ferryman, etc., who hardly stand in any external connection with the action. Lastly, the motives which the poet every now and then employs for introducing a comic scene (for instance, in act vi. 2, 3), do not show the slightest trace of Shakspeare's great talent in comedy, which is so distinctly manifest in all his earlier plays, with the sole exception of 'Titus Andronicus.'

In addition to this is the fact, that in all of Shakspeare's earlier dramas we find a greater or lesser number of passages in rhyme. Of these we find none in 'Arden of Feversham,' nay, even the rhyming couplet with which Shakspeare, in all his plays, usually closes a long speech or scene, is here met with only four times in the whole play. I, therefore, consider the piece one of the best of the works of the earlier pre-Shakspearian school, but not

even as having been produced under Shakspeare's influence, much less as having been written by him.*

The *Life and Death of the Lord Cromwell*, has scarcely any more claim to the name of Shakspeare: it is entered at Stationers' Hall under the date of 11th of August, 1602, as 'a booke called the Lyfe and Deathe of the Lord Cromwell, as yt was lately acted by the Lord Chamberleyn his servants'—hence by Shakspeare's company—and was printed in the same year without the author's name. It was the second edition of 1613 that first gave Shakspeare's initials (W. S.) on the title-page. It is very improbable that these initials can be meant to refer to the above-mentioned Wentworth Smith, under whose name Malone and other English critics are so ready to take refuge, because he was at that time intimately connected with Henslowe's company. At all events according to Henslowe's Diary, between April 1601 and March 1603, Smith wrote no less than fourteen plays for the Lord Admiral's company, all of which had been written in conjunction with other poets. He appears to have produced little or nothing alone. Moreover, it is difficult to see why Smith's name should not have been printed in full on the title-page. Assuredly, therefore, the initials are meant to refer to Shakspeare's name, and this would seem to make it a likely supposition that the reason of the publication of the play, with the popular name of Shakspeare, was but a speculation of some bookseller. At best, therefore, the authority is only that of a bookseller, from which, as already shown, little or nothing is to be gained.

If, accordingly, the internal structure of the play is to decide the question of its genuineness, the first point will be to determine the date of its origin. The publisher's words, 'as yt was lately acted,' would be in favour of the

* My view is, in general, agreed to both by Ch. Knight (*l. c.* p. 82) and by N. Delius (*Pseudo-Shakspear'sche Dramen*, Elberfeld, 1856, Preface, p. vi). I differ from them only in so far as I do not consider the play of so much value, and not as equal to *Edward the Third*, and accordingly, even in the second edition of my work, declared myself as opposed to its genuineness. Mézières (*Prédécesseurs de Shaksp.*, etc., p. 106 f.) finds the characters of Mosbie and Alice so excellent that he thinks it evident that Shakspeare had a hand in their delineation, and accordingly ascribes at least some part of the play to him.

year 1601-2, were we certain that it was lately written as well as 'lately acted.' The supposition, however, is not probable, inasmuch as the frequent occurrence of rhyming lines points to an earlier date, and admits of the possibility of its having been an older work that was merely revived about the year 1602. This conjecture is also supported by the plan and the composition of the play, which is the most unsatisfactory part about it. The narrative, epic style, which describes the life of a man through all its various stages, and thus divides the play into a number of smaller pieces, points to the earlier school which Shakspeare at first joined; but this style is appropriate only for the epic, legendary, fantastic subject of the story of Pericles, not for the historical subject of the life of Cromwell. For a legend is essentially the past poetically described in the present, or rather the present in the past; it therefore takes the form of the epos, the narrative. History, on the other hand, is history only as a living present, containing the essence of the past and determining the nature of the future; it, therefore, requires a strictly dramatic form, that inner unity of place, of time, and of action, which pervades not only all Shakspeare's later dramas, but—as regards his 'histories'—even his earlier plays. In 'The Life and Death of Cromwell,' however, all the three unities are disregarded: the first act has different fundamental conditions and a different significance from the second and third acts.* The unity consists only of the unity of the person, whose life and fortunes are depicted in the play.

Still, we are forced to admire the skill with which the poet contrives to gather up the many loosely arranged threads, and ultimately collects the various persons whom he introduced on different occasions, although he does not succeed in bringing their dramatic existence to a proper close. It is only to a certain extent that the play can be said to reflect Shakspeare's fine skill in giving organic roundness to the subject-matter, inasmuch as it is based upon one view of life. This view, however, is too indefinite, too general, and more epic than

* This is a point upon which Ch. Knight lays special emphasis in his criticism of the play.

dramatic; for life is conceived in its surging movement, at times as falling to the lowest ebb of misfortune, and then as rising on the full tide of the highest glory and splendour. This is exhibited not only in the fortunes of Cromwell, but likewise in the manifold fluctuations in the fortunes of Banister and his family, of Bagot, Bedford and Frescobald, not excepting honest Hodge and Seely. The delineation of the characters follows the general rules of epic composition: Thomas Cromwell is always noble, amiable, talented and lofty in his aims; his father a good-hearted braggart; Gardiner, ambitious, jealous and revengeful; the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, ordinary courtiers who rejoice in the fall of a rival but have not the strength or the courage to meddle with things themselves; Bedford, on the other hand, is a man in the dress of a courtier, he is grateful, grieves for the fall of a friend, but is without the wit or the energy to give actual assistance; Banister is an innocent but unfortunate individual; Frescobald, a thoroughly noble character; Bagot, on the other hand, an utter scoundrel; Hodge a foolish, good-natured simpleton, whose stupidity proves his good fortune, &c. All these figures are depicted outwardly in light but correct outlines; the depth of their inner life is left wholly unrevealed, and only in so far as they take any real part in the action do they at all stand out from the canvas. Yet the comic characters—Cromwell, Hodge, and Seely and his wife—occasionally show a touch of Shakspearian humour.

All this does indeed admit of the possibility of the play being reckoned as one of Shakspeare's first attempts in the domain of historical drama; but it cannot be dated so far back as this. For, apart from the fact that Shakspeare's earliest historical plays are invariably distinguished by greater depth and sharpness of characterisation, by more careful motives for the incidents and a stricter connection between the details and the whole, these very plays prove that Shakspeare seems at first to have rejected the invariable introduction of verse as inappropriate for this species of drama (such passages are first of more frequent occurrence in his 'Richard II.'). In addition to this, the fiction, in tone and colouring, bears the stamp of belonging

to an earlier date and of possessing but very little of Shakspeare's style. Generally speaking it does indeed show some affinity to the straightforward, calm flow of the language in 'Pericles.' But this regular movement is not adapted to the subject of the representation; Shakspeare would have clothed the subject in a perfectly different dress. As in the older 'King John,' the expression of sentiment is wanting in warmth, the outbursts of emotion and of passion in elevation, the reflection in acuteness and richness of substance as well as of form; in like manner there is a total absence of Shakspearian spell-words, his striking brevity of expression, the rapid change from the language of feeling to that of reflection, and conversely,—characteristics which, even though to a small extent, distinguish Shakspeare's youthful works from those of his fellow labourers.

The language, on the other hand, shows distinct traces of that higher development of dramatic diction which the English drama, through Shakspeare's influence, acquired during the last decade of the 16th century. In some passages Shakspeare's influence is, I think, directly evident. It may have been this that induced the publisher to give the play Shakspeare's name; in fact, the author may have been an admirer of his. Accordingly, in my opinion, 'The Life and Death of Lord Cromwell' cannot, in spite of its epic style and composition, have been written earlier than 1595—that is, cannot well be a work of Shakspeare's.

CHAPTER VI.

KING EDWARD III. AND A YORKSHIRE TRAGEDY.

‘KING Edward III.’, I think, exhibits more of Shakspeare’s spirit and character than any of the doubtful plays hitherto examined. In the registers of the Stationers’ Company, where it appears under the title of *Edward the Third and the Black Prince, etc.*, it is entered no less than four times; first on Dec. 1, 1595, and last on Feb. 23, 1625, it was therefore doubtless a favourite piece. It was first printed in 1596, and again in 1599, without the author’s name. Of later editions—if such ever appeared—no copy has been preserved. Accordingly, we have no external evidence of ‘Edward III.’ being a work of Shakspeare’s, it was first entered under his name by the compilers of old catalogues.

However, the mere want of a name on the two old prints cannot be looked upon as an argument against the genuineness of the play, for it is well known that a number of the older editions of Shakspeare’s undoubtedly genuine works present the same defect; this is a natural consequence of the already described circumstances of the English drama, as well as of the recency of Shakspeare’s fame at that period. But even though the later editions of ‘Edward III.’—which according to the Stationers’ books were to have been published in the years 1609, 1617 and 1625—did appear without the author’s name, still, this startling circumstance might in some measure be explained by the nature of the piece, and therefore prove nothing against Shakspeare’s being the author. In the first two acts, for instance, we have sharp cutting attacks upon the Scotch, prompted by English patriotism; these passages were quite in their right place during the lifetime of Elizabeth, who, it is well known, was as little fond of her successor as she was of his mother, and always on bad terms with Scotland; on the other hand they must have

been offensive to James I. Now it was to James, as we have seen, that Shakspeare was indebted for many a favour, and he has shown his obligations to him not only indirectly in 'Macbeth,' but more expressly in 'Henry VIII.' Accordingly, in order to avoid wounding his own sense of gratitude, Shakspeare may have either expressly disavowed his paternity of 'Edward III.,' or, at least, have refused to acknowledge it, and thus left the play—which, perhaps for other reasons, did not satisfy him—to its fate. This supposition may likewise explain how it happened that the work—although perhaps unquestionably Shakspeare's own—could have been overlooked or intentionally omitted by his friends Heminge and Condell, the editors of the first folio.

In spite of the want of external evidence it might, accordingly, nevertheless be admissible to attribute the play to Shakspeare, provided that its external construction in form and substance were decidedly to favour the supposition. If, therefore, the play be somewhat more carefully examined, it will at once strike every reader with any experience in artistic form, that the first two acts stand too much apart—quite contrary to Shakspeare's mode of composition—and that they are only internally connected with the three following acts, not externally as well. In the first two, the action turns upon the King's love for the beautiful Countess of Salisbury, whom he had released from the hands of the besieging Scottish army. This affair is never again alluded to, and ends entirely with the close of the second act, where the King, overcome and at the same time strengthened by the virtuous greatness of the Countess, becomes master of himself and renounces his passion. The Countess, accordingly, retires altogether from the scene, which is now transferred to the victorious campaign of Edward III. and of his son the Black Prince.

The play, therefore, falls into two outwardly unconnected halves, in reality into two distinct pieces. The fault which this involves, and which—as far as I know—I was the first to point out, would lose some of its objection if, to judge from the style and character of the play, it were possible to reckon it among Shakspeare's

first attempts. In that case it might readily be assumed that Shakspeare followed R. Greene in 'Pericles,' Marlowe in 'Titus Andronicus,' and that in the province of history he inclined to the earlier school, which saw no objection in similar divisions of the subject (as, for instance, in the older play of 'Henry V.,' the older 'Richard III.,' and even in Marlowe's 'Massacre at Paris'). The fault is further lessened, to some extent, by the fact that internally at least—as it seems to me—the two halves are connected, even though it be only by a bond which is very gently hinted at.* For in the first two acts we have the mighty King (who in his rough grandeur and reckless energy reminds us of characters in 'Henry VI.' and 'Richard III.') enslaved by an unworthy passion, and so small, so powerless, and so unkingly in the presence of the virtue and duty of a woman, that he suddenly forgets his great plans in making love-ditties and weaving intrigues. All human greatness and power collapse when unsupported by the fundamental principle of all morality, self-control; the greatest energy of man cannot resist the attacks of evil desires and passions when they are directed against his weak and unguarded side, unless they are curbed by the force of self-control,—this is the nucleus of the view of life upon which the first part is based. True energy may, however, rise again; it is strengthened by the virtue of others which, being endowed with a greater amount of stability, holds its own against it. The second act closes with this consoling lesson, and with the powerful description of the far nobler energy of a woman who, in order to guard her own honour and to save her sovereign from crime, is ready to sacrifice her own life. This close, even though but inwardly, forms the transition to the second half in so far as the latter then shows us true heroic greatness in its full glory—because tested by self-control—both in the King himself and in his famous son. For the Prince too has been trained in the same school; at the end of the second act, by his prompt and silent obedience to his father's commands—although directly opposed to his own wishes—he exhibits the same self-

* In act ii. scene 2.

control to which the King had roused himself. Nothing can resist such sublime moral strength when supported by right. The arrogant John of France—who although aware of the injustice of his claim, nevertheless endeavours in all possible ways to maintain his position, and in blind revenge and in the most unroyal manner refuses to keep the promise made by the Dauphin—he, and his equally arrogant son, both of whom boast of their superiority, are thrice defeated, and carried prisoners to England. As in ‘Henry V.,’ so here inward strength of mind and character, although possessed of the smallest outward means, proves victorious over outward power and force. At the close of the last act also, King Edward again gives a proof of the mastery he has acquired over himself by the clemency which he shows towards the town of Calais, and the Black Prince preserves throughout his modest, obedient spirit, which has remained unaffected by his great and famous victories. Thus the whole play sets forth the lesson that true heroism, conquest and dominion in this world go hand in hand with the mastery man possesses over himself. We here have the same theme which resounds through all Shakspeare’s historical dramas, and through his tragedies, nay even through many of his comedies; in fact, we have pulsating through the whole play the same pure, ethical feeling which forms the life-blood of Shakspeare’s dramas.

But even as regards characterisation and diction, ‘Edward III.,’ in my opinion, comes nearer to Shakspeare’s spirit and character than any of the doubtful plays yet examined. The characters it is true, as already said, are drawn with but a few powerful strokes in the manner of those in ‘Henry VI.’ and ‘Richard III.’ But this ruggedness possesses great poetic vigour, which is not attained by any of the characters of Greene, Peele, Kyd, or even by any of Marlowe’s heroes, because their energy lacks the ethical foundation. It is only at the commencement of the third act that the representation becomes tame and heavy; some of the characters, such as Louis and his Queen, are too insipid and colourless, others are treated too much as mere secondary characters. Yet how full and lifelike, on the other hand, in spite of the

small use of artificial means, are the characters of King Edward and the Black Prince, the Countess of Salisbury and her father, King John and his sons, Salisbury, Villiers and Copeland! This must be evident to every careful reader; for instance, in the description of King Edward becoming aware of the first stirrings of his passion for the Countess; how he tries to fly from her presence, but is, as it were, bound by a charm, hesitates against his own will, and remains; again, in the last scene of the second act where the King—reminded by his heroic and warlike son of his faithful consort, and of the great undertakings he has in hand—is on the point of following his better impulses, but, overcome by a smile from the Countess, drops the resolution he had formed only again to be overcome by her in a different manner; further, in those scenes in the 3rd and 4th acts, where, on the one hand, the father with grand severity, refuses to send succour to his own son so that his bravery might be put to the test, and scope be given him for distinguishing himself; and where, on the other hand, we have the Prince, surrounded by an army six times as strong as his own, resigning himself to his fate in the very spirit of mediæval chivalry, but ultimately (by the grace of God, who, by ominous signs and predictions, scatters fear and panic among the enemy's ranks) gaining a most glorious victory—these scenes, I think, are not unworthy even of old Shakspeare.

In like manner, lastly, the language in tone and colouring, generally shows so much affinity to Shakspeare's style, and the structure of the verse (with its regular rhythm and its usually masculine endings) so much resemblance to Shakspeare's versification—more especially to that of 'King John'—that, at first sight at least, this would again lead us to suppose the play to be one of Shakspeare's works.

This praise which I conferred upon the play in the second edition of this work, and which has been more or less conditionally agreed to by Charles Knight,* N. Delius† and von Friesen,‡ I cannot retract in any one

* *Studies of Shakspeare.*

† *Pseudo-Shakspeare'schen Dramen*, Preface, p. ix.

‡ *Jahrbuch d. Deutschen Shaksp. Gesellschaft*, ii. 66 f.

point. It is certainly founded upon, and refers only to general points of comparison, to the spirit and character, to the form and substance of the play. But there are, in addition, a number of passages which verge so closely upon Shakspeare's mode of expression, that we feel that Shakspeare would have expressed the same thoughts in a similar manner; nay, there are several lines which give thoughts, similies and images which are met with in Shakspeare's undoubtedly genuine works, and expressed almost in the same words. Again in act ii. 1, there occurs a line so precisely the same as one in Shakspeare's 94th Sonnet, that the question only is whether Shakspeare borrowed it from 'Edward III.,' or whether the author of this play took it from Shakspeare's Sonnet. Von Friesen has collected these single cases which favour the supposition of Shakspeare's being the author of the piece, and, like Delius, finds it natural that even Capell did not venture to deny the genuineness of the work, and that Tieck (whom in the second edition of my book I followed) unhesitatingly declares himself in favour of it.

Yet I have now come to the conviction that the play was *not* written by Shakspeare. In England there exist—as far as I know—but two old quartos (in single copies) and the print published by Capell in 1760; but even the latter has become so scarce that Ch. Knight, in his criticism of the play, introduces a series of characteristic passages as specimens for his readers. At the time when I was writing the second edition of this work, I was unable to procure the original text, and was therefore obliged to have recourse to Tieck's translation of the play. But now that I have become acquainted with the English text* I am induced—not so much on account of its several defects and un-Shakspearian passages which are adduced by both Knight and Von Friesen, as on account of its style and diction in general—to agree with them in regarding it as spurious.

The language, in spite of its affinity to Shakspeare's style of diction, in general, and in the individual passages

* Through Delius' *Pseudo-Shakspeare'sche Dramen*, English text, with German notes.

adduced, betrays a poet of considerable talent, it is true, but without genius, without independent creative power, a poet who, although endowed with the appreciation of and the feeling for true poetry, and although he worked upon good models and in all cases endeavoured to find truly poetic expressions, was nevertheless unable freely to create them, and therefore often enough succeeds in hitting them, but as frequently misses the mark. Further, it betrays a poet, not like Shakspeare and every artistic genius, as growing with the greatness of the task he has to solve, with the higher development of his subject, but as one unequal to it; again, an *experienced* poet, not as one coming forward hesitatingly with his first production, but as one who has already made various attempts—it may be in different paths—and now decidedly follows in the footsteps of Shakspeare. For that ‘Edward III.’ is written under Shakspeare’s influence, that its author has taken Shakspeare’s historical plays as his models—more especially his ‘King John’*—must, I think, be regarded as proved both by the conception and the treatment of the subject, as well as by the tone and colour of the language, and by the several obvious imitations of Shakspeare’s mode of expression. If, accordingly, the drama cannot be a youthful work of Shakspeare’s own, and if, as is more probable, it did not appear till about 1594, then the above-mentioned division of the play into two unconnected halves is of so much weight, that we must necessarily regard it as not a work of Shakspeare’s. For towards the year 1594, Shakspeare, with his fine feeling for the necessity of giving harmonious roundness to the dramatic composition, could not possibly have committed such an offence against its laws; the poet who had already presented the world with such plays as ‘Richard III.’ and ‘King John’ cannot possibly have been the author of ‘Edward III.’

Yet this drama is so important a work, so distinguished among the productions presented to the theatre of the day, that it is only the peculiar position then occupied by a dramatic poet that can, in some measure, explain how

* When discussing this play I endeavoured to prove that it probably appeared on the stage as early as 1593.

its author could remain so wholly unknown. Every conjecture formed in regard to his person must, accordingly, be a critical venture in a double sense; I am, therefore, perfectly well aware that I am but making a conjecture, and that I cannot establish my hypothesis when pointing to the possibility of R. Lodge having been the author of 'Edward III.' But, at all events, to him apply the features which, as regards the poetic individuality of its author, I think, can be inferred from the subject and form of the play. His only extant historical play, 'The Wounds of Civil War,' which probably appeared soon after Marlowe's 'Tamburlaine,' hence about 1587-8, we have already discussed.* Even this piece, which evidently took Marlowe's 'Tamburlaine' as its model, exhibits that dependence of the poetical conception, which gladly supports itself upon other writers; but on the other hand, it differs in spirit and character—particularly in its decidedly ethical tendency—as much from Marlowe's style as it approaches the genius of Shakspeare. Further, its composition also, betrays some affinity to 'Edward III.,' even though not externally, for it likewise falls into two halves which proceed alongside of one another, but internally unconnected. Lastly, I also think that the conception of the characters and their development in the course of the action (for instance in the similar case of the sudden moral change in Sulla's mind and character, as well as the endeavour to give the play an elevating termination) contain features of resemblance which point to Lodge.

The fact of 'Edward III.' being nevertheless considerably superior to 'The Wounds of Civil War,' is simply explained from the greater excellence of the model upon which Lodge formed his 'Edward III.' Besides this, there is probably an intermediate period of from five to six years between the composition of the last-mentioned play and that of his other and first historical drama; and it was during this interval that great Shakspeare made his appearance, which must assuredly have made a much deeper and more effectual impression upon the public, as well as upon actors and dramatic poets, than is

* Vol. i. p. 124 f.

generally assumed, or can be proved to have been the case.

A Yorkshire Tragedy:* this play, the last that bears the name of Shakspeare, will not require so long a discussion. It is entered in the Stationers' registers on May 2nd, 1608, with the express remark, "written by William Shakspeare." It was printed in the same year with Shakspeare's full name on the title-page (and again in 1619). The same title-page also says, that it was performed, together with three other small pieces, by the King's players, that is, by Shakspeare's Company. The publisher's name certainly does not awaken any favourable prejudice; for it is the same who attributed the paternity of 'Sir John Oldcastle' to Shakspeare. However, this prejudice vanishes when we bear in mind that the same Th. Pavier also published some of Shakspeare's genuine plays, such as 'Henry V.' (two editions, 1602 and 1608), and that the above remark in the Stationers' registers, if it were untrue, would be senseless and to no purpose, as the entries in the registers were not made public; a closer examination of the nature of the piece also, makes one more inclined to credit his statement.

The internal evidence of its genuineness is, in fact, so overwhelming that English critics are beginning to change their views. Collier, at least, unhesitatingly declares it to be a work of Shakspeare's, and even A. Dyce thinks that it has more claim to be classed among Shakspeare's plays than 'Titus Andronicus.'† The play gives a brief, plain, and simple representation of a crime

* In Johnson and Steevens, *l. c.* p. 631 ff.

† Collier, in an article contributed to the *Athenæum* of March, 1863, p. 3327 (in which he gives an account of the discovery of the pamphlet which reports the actual occurrence upon which the play is founded), has altered his opinion in so far as he now thinks that if the piece is not entirely Shakspeare's, he must, nevertheless, have had 'a main finger' in it, inasmuch as it is probable that several poets set to work upon the subject, so as to bring it upon the stage with the utmost possible despatch. Collier also thinks that the tragic parts were left to Shakspeare, whereas the comic scenes, and among these the introductory scene with the servants, was written by another poet, and probably bridged when the parts were put together. The same pamphlet shows that the occurrence to which the drama refers happened in 1605, not in 1604.

that was perpetrated in Yorkshire in 1605, and had created great interest throughout the country. A father, utterly ruined in mind and fortune by his passion for gambling, in despair murders his two children, stabs his wife, throws down and tramples upon his servant who tries to interfere, but is finally overpowered, and brought to consciousness and repentance, simply by his wife's continued love towards him in spite of his maltreatment of her; thus he again becomes a man, and, at least, dies as a man, even though his life has not been that of one—this is the substance of the tragedy. Of course if we apply the standard furnished by Shakspeare's great tragedies—'Hamlet,' 'King Lear,' and 'Macbeth'—to this piece, it will be found so trivial and insignificant that it seems presumption to call it a tragedy. For there is here no question of a conception of life from its inward depth, from a tragic point of view, no complicate action, no artistic skill in the composition exciting or engaging our imagination, no great, important or fully developed characters to rivet our interest. All is confined within the limits of ordinary domestic life, and this limit is nowhere exceeded.

But apart from its title—which scarcely comes into consideration, as the term tragedy was at that time used in a very wide sense—the play makes no sort of pretension, much less a claim to being a great historico-tragic picture; it is, in fact, merely a dramatic *portrait*, the object of which is to exhibit with poetical truth a *single* incident taken from life. But a portrait is a work of art only when, in addition to being a careful copy of nature, it, at the same time, gives something more than nature, *i.e.* when it exhibits both the outward form and the inner man (which is in reality developed only by a succession of individual incidents) in his organic unity, fully and completely, and thus, as it were, presents a living picture of humanity. In the same way the 'Yorkshire Tragedy' represents but a single actual incident, it is true, but shows it to us in its whole terrible significance, and with a truth and vividness that—although we know nothing of the previous life of the unhappy murderer—we can nevertheless clearly imagine his whole past life. It is

on account of this that the piece acquires a more general significance, and that it becomes a dramatic work of art, taking a subordinate place by the side of the great tragedies, only in so far as the latter represent the general and the ideal indirectly, whereas, in the present case, these appear exhibited directly only, so to say, symbolically by a single incident.

Accordingly, the question as to whether the play is one of Shakspeare's, can be decided only by an examination of individual features—of the characters and of the language. Some passages, for instance the lamentation of the unhappy wife and mother, at the very beginning :

What will become of us ? All will away !
My husband never ceases in expense,
Both to consume his credit and his house, etc.

and the subsequent speech of the husband :

Divines and dying men may talk of hell,
But in my heart her several torments dwell, etc.,

can, as I think, hardly have been written by any other than Shakspeare. But the character of the hero also, his wild despair, his terrible dread of the spectre poverty, which has driven him to the very threshold of madness, and ultimately, in a kind of frenzy, urges him to murder his own children ; and again the almost demoniacal love of his wife, which gives evidence of the most extraordinary energy, and is yet of such purely passive endurance, bearing all the outbursts of her husband's violence with the utmost meekness, she, who does not grieve over the death of her children but over the fate of her husband, who has no word of reproach against him, but only entreaties for his love, till, in the end, her love melts the ice of despair which had encrusted his heart, and he becomes conscious of what he has done and what he is throwing away—these are traits and features of character which, it is true, are not fully developed, but nevertheless could only have been conceived by Shakspeare.

On the other hand, however, the piece, as a whole, not only bears the mark of a carelessness and hurry such

as Shakspeare cannot often be accused of, but some scenes, according to my feeling, differ so widely in tone and character from Shakspeare's mature and fully developed style, that it appears to me doubtful whether they were written by him. At all events, it is very remarkable that the first scene between the servants, Ralph, Oliver and Samuel, does not stand in any sort of connection with the following and principal part of the action, and that it has quite the appearance of having been originally composed for a more elaborate treatment of the subject on a broader basis. And yet this very scene shows how little the comic scenes possess of Shakspeare's colouring. There also occur passages of very striking obscurity in the development of the action, which again make me doubtful. Hence I am inclined to subscribe to Collier's hypothesis, that Shakspeare undertook to dramatise the subject simply at the request of his company, who wished to profit by the excitement and general interest created by the occurrence, and that, for the sake of the hurry with which the play had to be got up before the interest subsided—he engaged one or two friendly coadjutors who entered into his style of treating the subject. He may then have sketched out the parts he had reserved for himself, and, as such patch-work cannot assuredly have been to his taste, may have handed over the arrangement of the several parts to some disinterested third party—perhaps to the manager of the theatre.

Accordingly, the play was perhaps brought upon the stage soon after the occurrence; probably, however, after the interest in the affair had subsided it was set aside and—although perhaps warmed up again in 1618-19—did not meet with any great success. This is the simplest explanation of how the publisher came to call it a work of Shakspeare's in the entry at Stationers' Hall, and of how he could, without reproof, as it seems, venture to place Shakspeare's name in full, in the two editions issued by him, whereas Heminge and Condell, although acquainted with its origin, disdained, or did not presume, to give it a place among Shakspeare's works.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BIRTH OF MERLIN, THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN, AND THE
CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF SHAKSPEARE'S PLAYS.

IN closing the examination of the doubtful plays, I have still to consider other two which are said to have been written by Shakspeare in conjunction with some other poet.

The first of these is *The Birth of Merlin*, a fantastic play, which was published in 1662, by Kirkman (from his collection of manuscripts), with the names of Shakspeare and *William Rowley*. Otherwise we know nothing about the piece, and hence it is very doubtful whether a man like Kirkman—the same who made such a decided mistake in regard to ‘The Arraignment of Paris’—can be trusted. English critics are unanimously opposed to his assertion. Tieck,* on the other hand, has translated the play, and in a detailed critique has endeavoured to make it probable, ‘that Shakspeare, in his maturer years (for the play cannot well have been written earlier than towards the middle of James’s reign) had, out of friendship, assisted a brother actor and poet to produce this singular and charming work. Tieck ranks it with the best of this species of writing that he knows of. Delius† also, who has had it reprinted in his recent edition of Shakspeare’s doubtful plays, speaks of it with undisguised approval. I do not deny the merits of the play, although I am far from believing them to be as great as Tieck thinks. But its excellence can prove nothing, as all the essential parts—plan, composition and characterisation—are no doubt Rowley’s, and Shakspeare at most only *assisted* him. However, even admitting the justness of all that is advanced by Tieck in favour of his view, it nevertheless seems to me more than doubtful whether Shakspeare wrote as much

* In the Preface to his *Vorschule Shakspeare’s*, xvi. f. xxxiv. f.

† In his *Pseudo-Shakspeare’sche Dramen*.

as one line of it. For the language, upon which in this case all depends, is throughout so invariably the same, that Tieck himself is unable to determine which parts may have been Shakspeare's. It is only on account of the peculiar beauty of the third and fifth acts, that Tieck supposes them to be the work of a master hand, a supposition which is unwarrantable unless the supposed assistance were an established fact; this, however, is quite an arbitrary assumption as long as its advocates have to admit that language and versification, imagery and thoughts, etc., are throughout of the same character.

Now the language of 'The Birth of Merlin'—as every unprejudiced reader will at once acknowledge—is so thoroughly unlike Shakspeare (especially if it be considered that the play must have been composed almost contemporaneously with 'King Lear,' 'Coriolanus,' 'Macbeth,' etc.), that Tieck himself is obliged to have recourse to a second supposition: that Shakspeare possessed the talent of completely casting aside his own style and of adopting the language and individuality of another poet. Who would deny that Shakspeare's language is wont to reflect with equal truth the most different tones of the most different characters in the most different moments of life? And yet through all its most manifold modifications, it always remains Shakspeare's language, in the same way as in the most varied compositions we may have the most various forms and colourings, and yet always detect the colouring of a Rafaele, a Titian, or a Correggio. It is always Shakspeare that is speaking, and he speaks differently only in so far as he speaks in different characters. At any rate there would be an end to all criticism of language, were it to admit so great a degree of power in disguising language, as Tieck assumes here to be the case. For, naturally, it would come to be a matter of impossibility to infer the genuineness or spuriousness of a work from its language, were it true that an author could, at pleasure, express himself with ease and fluency either in his own style or in that of another. But this could scarcely be the result even of intentional and most careful imitation, which, however, is not the point at issue in the present case.

Hence, in making the above assertion, Tieck throws up his best weapon of criticism and puts the game into the hands of his adversaries. His method of criticism is, in fact, somewhat arbitrary. He appeals so frequently 'to certain usages of Shakspeare's, to certain turns and figures of speech, certain transitions common to him, certain ways of turning or breaking off his thoughts'—in short, to peculiarities of which he himself cannot or does not choose to give any closer definition. He is too arbitrary in his assumption that Shakspeare worked in a variety of different manners—an assertion which would require first to be established in the case of the poet's genuine works, which Tieck, however, adduces only in favour of those doubtful plays the genuineness of which he defends. He adheres too little to the precise, unchanging and primary form of Shakspeare's poetry, which his various compositions merely serve to develop, that is, to a style entirely and peculiarly Shakspearian. By such a proceeding the critical estimate of what is genuine or spurious becomes a mere play of subjective opinion. According to such principles, all the more or less excellent plays of unknown authorship—in which this period of English literature abounds—might be attributed to the great master. I therefore perfectly agree with the verdict of English critics, that Shakspeare had no hand whatever in the composition of 'The Birth of Merlin.'

Lastly, as regards the play which Shakspeare is said to have written in conjunction with Fletcher, I mention it here again merely out of consideration for A. Dyce and his opinion. I allude to Fletcher's well-known tragedy, the original edition of which appeared in 1634 under the title of '*The Two Noble Kinsmen: presented at Blackfriars by the King's Maiesties servants, with great applause: written by the memorable Worthies of their time, Mr. John Fletcher and Mr. William Shakspeare, Gent.*'

The play was first included among the works of Shakspeare (together with six other doubtful pieces) by the editors of the folios of 1664 and 1685. Dyce has admitted it into his edition of Shakspeare, by the side of 'Pericles, because, as he says, he is perfectly convinced that por-

tions of the play are from Shakspeare's pen.' He appeals, in confirmation of his view, to Coleridge,* who incidentally observes that he 'unhesitatingly believes that Shakspeare was concerned in the composition of this play.' Walker,† also, was of the opinion that 'the whole [of the first] act bears indisputable marks of Shakspeare's hand;' that in the first scene of that act we have 'surely *aut Shakspearius aut diabolus*,' and that the first scene of the fifth act 'surely is Shakspeare's also.' Spalding,‡ too, declares that 'the whole of the first act may safely be pronounced to be Shakspeare's,' that 'in the second act no part seems to have been taken by Shakespeare,' that nothing in the third act can with confidence be attributed to Shakspeare except the first scene,' that 'the fourth act may safely be pronounced wholly Fletcher's,' that 'in the fifth act we again feel the presence of the master of the spell . . . the whole act, a very long one, may be boldly attributed to him with the exception of one episodical scene.' Dyce thinks that Shakspeare wrote all those portions of the play which Spalding assigns to him, but adds, 'I conceive that in some places they may have been altered and interpolated by Fletcher.'

These are certainly authorities whom I scarcely venture to contradict, and whom it would be better not to contradict, as my judgment will probably find no acceptance in opposition to theirs. However, in the first place, they do not altogether agree among one another; in this alone are they unanimous, that the first act must be Shakspeare's. In addition to this, however, Dyce§ remarks, most justly, as I think, that: 'Fletcher's contributions include the distraction of the Gaoler's daughter, which in some points is a direct plagiarism of Ophelia's madness in "Hamlet," and it is highly improbable that, if the two dramatists had worked together on the tragedy, Fletcher would have ventured to make so free with the poetical property of Shakspeare: indeed, I fully assent to the truth of Mr.

* *Table Talk*, ii. 119.

† *Critical Examination of the Text of Shakspeare*, i. 227; ii. 75.

‡ *A Letter on Shakespeare's Authorship of the Two Noble Kinsmen*.

§ *Some Account of the Lives and Writings of Beaumont and Fletcher*,

Knight's remark that the underplot, the love of the Gaoler's (nameless) daughter for Palamon, her agency in his escape from prison, her subsequent madness, and her unnatural and revolting union with one who is her lover under these circumstances, is of a nature not to be tolerated in any work with which he [Shakspeare] was concerned I feel assured that they [the Shakspearian portions] existed before Fletcher contributed anything to the play.' But how does Dyce, with such a supposition, conceive the whole to have come into its present shape? Can he have thought that Shakspeare worked piecemeal in the manner of a joiner, who first makes the legs and then the top of a table, &c. Or, in the case before us, are we to suppose that Shakspeare wrote the first and the fifth acts—which stand in no sort of connection—and of the intermediate part nothing but the first scene of the third act, in which the two noble kinsmen dispute about their passion for Emilia, without having previously described the origin of this passion or the character of the two heroes? What is supposed to have induced Fletcher to appropriate these fragments (with or against Shakspeare's consent), he, who could himself have written all these supposed Shakspearian portions, if not as well as Shakspeare, at least as well as the intermediate parts? And what are the characteristics, the evidences of the Shakspearian origin of those portions?

Let us examine the first act, which is supposed to have the best claim, a little more closely. Theseus and Hippolyta, accompanied by Hymen, nymphs, and a boy in a white robe, etc., appear on the stage in festal garments to celebrate their marriage; but before the procession has reached the temple, there enter three nameless Queens in mourning attire and with stained veils, beseeching Theseus to give them assistance against Creon, the tyrant of Thebes, who has refused burial to their royal consorts who fell in battle, and who means to leave the bodies on the field to become a prey to wild beasts. Theseus, touched by their entreaties and urged by Hippolyta and Emilia, determines to march against Thebes, from which expedition he hopes to have returned ere the wedding feast is over. This closes the first scene. Second scene: a long deliberation between Palamon and

Arcite (the two noble kinsmen) about their deep, uninterrupted friendship which has remained unclouded since their childhood, about the demoralisation and the sad state of Thebes under the tyranny of Creon, and about the question as to whether they shall secretly quit the city. An envoy summons them to appear before Creon, who has received the news that Theseus is approaching with an army; they decide to obey the summons and to defend their country, whatever may be their fate. Third scene: Perithous bids farewell to Hippolyta and Emilia, and accompanies Theseus against Thebes; Hippolyta describes, in glowing colours, the deep and devoted friendship between Perithous and Theseus; and Emilia, her sister, gives as vivid and minute an account of the great love which had existed between herself and Flavia, the friend of her youth, who had died. Fourth scene: the battle before Thebes; Theseus, as the victor, receives the thanks of the three Queens, and charges them now to find the bones of their dead lords and to honour them with 'a treble ceremony;' Palamon and Arcite are found among the dead, severely wounded, and are brought to Theseus, who, having seen them in the fight, and remarked their astonishing bravery, delivers them over to a herald, charging him to let them have every assistance that their lives may be saved. Fifth scene: a short chant at the funeral solemnities of the three kings; and the three Queens, after having in silence witnessed the ceremony, take leave of each other (in seven lines). This closes the act.

According to the laws of dramatic art, the first act should give the exposition, that is, describe the leading features in the characters of the dramatic personages, and their relation to one another, arrange the threads which are to form the knot of the dramatic development and complication, and intimate the catastrophe and issue of the action. This fundamental law, which Shakspeare has never failed to respect, is violated in almost every point by the first act of 'The Two Noble Kinsmen.' The dramatic personages are, it is true, all introduced, with the exception of the Gaoler and his daughter, but are described merely in general, indefinite, and ever the

same features (of love, friendship, and generosity). On the other hand, all the incidents of the first act—the marriage of Theseus, the fate of the three Queens, the tyranny of Creon and the state of Thebes, Theseus' victorious campaign, the funeral of the three Kings—stand in no sort of connection with the following action, the foundation of which is laid in the first scene of the second act (it is here that Palamon and Arcite, accidentally from their prison window, first see Emilia in the garden beneath, and become passionately enamoured of her). The three Queens disappear altogether from the stage, there is no further mention of Theseus' campaign, of Creon, or of Thebes; in fact, the play begins with the second act.

Dyce would find it difficult to adduce from Shakspeare's works—his youthful productions not excepted—an example of another such awkward, vague, and almost meaningless exposition. I consider the plan of the first act, and hence the composition of the whole play, utterly un-Shakspearian, and for this reason alone am doubtful whether Shakspeare had any hand in it. But even in the substance of the fifth act, I find absolutely no traces of Shakspeare's style. The act opens with long-winded praises, invocations, and vows which Arcite addresses to Mars, Palamon to Venus, and Emilia to Diana, and which are answered by the gods with signs and miracles. The second scene, which is supposed to have been written entirely by Fletcher, brings the story of the gaoler's daughter to its—as Knight terms it—'revolting' termination. A fight between the two rivals then takes place behind the scenes; Emilia meanwhile, on the stage, pours forth sentimental rhapsodies about the mischief which her beauty has occasioned, and about the state of her own affections, which still waver between the two combatants. While uttering words in praise of Arcite and sighing for Palamon, she receives the tidings that the former has conquered. Lastly, in the closing scene, we have Palamon being led to execution, taking leave of those around him, and about to place his head on the block, when suddenly a messenger enters in haste, followed by Perithous, calling 'Halt!' announcing that Arcite has been thrown from his horse, is on the point

of death, and wishes to see Palamon; Arcite is carried on to the stage accompanied by Theseus, Hippolyta, and Emilia, surrenders his beloved to his friend, and then dies. Emilia is content with the change; Theseus consents to the arrangement, and concludes the play by an eulogy upon the justice of the gods, for the powerful Venus has presented her knight (Palamon) with the lady of his love, and Mars bestowed upon his champion (Arcite) the palm of victory!

The whole act makes upon me the impression of an elaborate allegory in honour of the Goddess of Love. Can Shakspeare be supposed to have wasted as much as two lines of his masterly skill upon so tame and forced a solution of the tragic conflict? Is it conceivable that he would have employed so insipid a motive as the fall of a horse (a ride of which we do not even hear why or wherefore it was undertaken), for getting rid of one of the rivals? Is it conceivable that he would have been guilty of the psychological improbability, not to say untruth, contained in Emilia's perfectly equal affection for her two lovers? In short, where, in the whole act, is there a trace of Shakspeare's sharp and fine characterisation, of Shakspeare's skill in the dramatic application of given situations, of his power and precision in the description of mental conditions, in the expression of feelings and emotions? Where a trace of those ingenious and close relations into which he contrives to place not only his heroes, but all his dramatic personages and their fortunes, with the nucleus of the action? As long as I find no answer to these questions, I must abide by my opinion that it is neither the drama as a drama, neither the first nor the fifth acts as dramatic compositions, nor even single scenes as scenes, but simply the language employed by the personages in them, that has induced Coleridge and Walker, Spalding and Dyce to declare the passages adduced as 'Shakspearian portions.'

The language in these portions certainly does show an unusually close affinity to Shakspeare's diction, but, to my feeling, not so much in its general character as in individual features, turns, images, and modes of expression. Shakspeare, for instance, would assuredly

not have made the three Queens, in act i. 1, speak in the cool, oratorical tone in which they express their entreaties, but have made them express themselves in the language of feeling, of deep grief and wrathful indignation; he would certainly not have wasted thirty-nine rhetorically embellished lines in describing the fall of a horse and Arcite's skill in horsemanship, nor have furnished such lines with observations like the following:—

“A black horse with
Not a hair-worth of white, which some will say
Weakens his price, and many will not buy
His goodness with a note; which superstition
Here finds allowance—”

and again, where the horse is described as—

“Dancing as 't were to the music
His own hoofs made (for, as they say, from iron
Came music's origin)!”

Still the diction has a touch of Shakspeare's style. But, as I think, the difference between the supposed Shakspearian portions and the other parts of the piece are not so great as they must have appeared to Dyce and other English critics, to convince them of Shakspeare's having had a hand in them. But even granted that the difference were greater than it appears to me, at all events it is not sufficiently great to exclude the possibility that a poet of such eminent talent as Fletcher might—in one of his earlier works (for the play cannot, probably, be dated later than about 1608–9) have taken some of Shakspeare's characters as his models, and for a time come under Shakspeare's influence—as the ‘plagiarism’ from ‘Hamlet’ proves; further, that he might have succeeded in imitating Shakspeare's style in single features of diction, nay, that he might even have succeeded in striking a tone kindred to Shakspeare's own in whole portions of the play. This possibility seems to me much more likely than to assume that Shakspeare wrote scenes and whole acts which, in substance, stand in direct contradiction to the spirit and character of his own compositions.

Having now gone through the whole of Shakspeare's genuine as well as his doubtful plays, I shall subjoin a chronological arrangement of them, so as to give a clear survey of his career as a poet. It must, however, be distinctly understood that I do not claim full historical certainty for this classification. It is only the periods in which I have arranged them that I regard as sufficiently well established; the several years, on the other hand, are purely hypothetical.

First Period, from 1586 to 1591—1592.

Pericles, Prince of Tyre	1587
Titus Andronicus	1587-88
The First Part of the Contention, etc.	} original form of Henry VI. 1588-89
The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York	
The two latter revised and connected with the 1st Part of Henry VI.	1589-90
The Comedy of Errors	} 1590
The Two Gentlemen of Verona	

Second Period, from 1591-92 to 1597-98.

Love's Labour's Lost	} 1591-92
Taming of the Shrew	
All's Well that Ends Well	
Romeo and Juliet (first appearance)	1592
Richard III.	1593
King John	1593-94
Richard II.	1594-95
A Midsummer Night's Dream	} 1595
Henry IV., first part	
Henry VI., second part	
Revisal of Romeo and Juliet	} 1596-97
Merchant of Venice	

Third Period, from 1598 to 1605.

Hamlet	1598
Twelfth Night, or What You Will	1598
Much Ado About Nothing	1599
Henry V.	1599
As You Like It	1600
The Merry Wives of Windsor	1600
Troilus and Cressida (first sketch)	1601
Last revisal of Hamlet	1603
Othello	1604
Measure for Measure	1604
King Lear	} 1605-6
A Yorkshire Tragedy	

Fourth Period, from 1605 to 1613-14.

Julius Cæsar	1607
Antony and Cleopatra	1607
Coriolanus	1608
Troilus and Cressida (remodelled)	1608
Macbeth }	1609-10
Cymbeline }	
The Tempest	1610-11
The Winter's Tale }	
Henry VIII.	1611-12
Timon of Athens }	

When on the point of closing this chronological survey, I received the *Athenæum* of June 1868, and find on p. 863 an article according to which the *Extracts from the Accounts of the Revels at Court in the Reigns of Queen Elizabeth and James I.*, which P. Cunningham published for the English Shakspeare Society in 1862, and upon which the chronological determination of some of Shakspeare's plays principally depends, are strongly suspected of being forgeries. The anonymous author maintains, it is true, that the entries, which had been lost from the public archives and recently recovered, are on the whole undoubtedly genuine, but that all the entries concerning dramatic representations at Court—hence more especially the entries of *The Moor of Venice* on the 1st of November, 1604, of *The Merry Vives of Winsor* on the Sunday following, of *Mesur for Mesur* on St. Stephan's Night of the same year, as well as of *The Tempest* and of *Ye winter's night's Tayle* in 1611—have been added by a later (more modern?) hand; he thinks these entries were no doubt made by some one who had referred to these rolls, some leaves of which had inadvertently been left empty. The writer then adds: 'Who made these additions does not appear. There they are, and experts in old handwriting say they speak for themselves.'

If this supposed forgery should prove to be true, then, as I think, it would be doubtful whether *Othello* and *Measure for Measure* could have been written as early as 1604. However, as the author of the above article has not given his name, we are not yet bound to put faith in his assertions; and I am the more inclined to doubt their correctness, as it would deeply grieve me were a new case of deception by literary men again to upset the already unsteady credit of English literary historians.

BOOK VIII.

HISTORY OF SHAKSPEARE'S PLAYS IN ENGLAND.



CHAPTER I.

STATE OF DRAMATIC POETRY DURING THE 17TH CENTURY.

As in the preceding Book, my object here cannot be to enter upon new discoveries in the domain of literary history; the necessary materials for such discoveries are in the possession of Englishmen alone. My intention is merely to arrange well-known historical facts—compressed into a brief sketch—according to a few leading principles, and thus to leave history itself, as it were, to pass sentence upon the æsthetic value of Shakspeare's plays. My object here is simply to give an *æsthetic* consideration of Shakspeare's plays; accordingly, literary history is to me only a means, even though an indispensable means, in so far as the æsthetic consideration must, as I think, necessarily rest upon an historical foundation.

I have already, in my first volume (pp. 227, 245, 297), stated the reasons why Shakspeare's plays, although not indeed altogether supplanted by the productions of the Ben Jonson School—more especially by those of Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, and others—nevertheless gradually lost the ascendancy which they had enjoyed. This rise of the Ben Jonson School and the reputation acquired by its founder is the first significant event in the history of Shakspeare's plays.

Not that this directly affected the fame and celebrity of Shakspeare, for even at the court of King James, as we

have seen, his plays remained particularly popular, notwithstanding the personal favour which Ben Jonson contrived more and more to obtain for himself. And even at a later period, after Shakspeare's death, they did not by any means disappear from the stage; they may have gradually been less frequently performed, but perhaps only because the public is ever desirous to have something new. On the contrary, Shakspeare's works evidently long continued to be general favourites and highly-esteemed, even though to a less extent than during his lifetime. G. Rümelin* maintains that it was in London alone that the drama created great and general interest, and that Shakspeare was not a national poet in his own day, that his works had never been really popular, inasmuch as his public, even in London, consisted only of the '*jeunesse dorée*' of the time, of idlers from the higher ranks, especially the young cavaliers who came to London in search of love adventures, sports, and other amusements, or of the lower orders of the people, artisans, apprentices, bargemen, workmen from the wharfs and manufactories, sailors, servants, and soldiers. But this remark is but the result of Rümelin's ignorance of the true state of the case. Shakspeare's name may, I admit, not have been known throughout the whole of England; for under certain circumstances it can happen that a work may enjoy the greatest popularity, and yet the name and person of its author be known only to limited circles:—were not the Greeks wholly ignorant of all concerning the person, the life and the character of their greatest and most popular poet, except his name, of which it is even now doubtful whether it is a proper name! And such circumstances, as we have seen, prevailed in Shakspeare's time, both as regards the English theatres and as regards its dramatists.

The theatre itself, however, was the most popular institution of the England of those days. To repeat a quotation from the eminent historian, Froude,† given in our last volume, 'acting was the special amusement of the English during the 16th century, from the palace

* *Shakspeare-Studien*, pp. 10, 16 ff.

† *History of England*, etc., i. 61.

down to the village greens.' As already shown, it was not only the lords of the land who kept their own companies of players, but, as Collier has proved, mayors and aldermen of the larger towns, such as York, Coventry, Lavenham, Chester, Kingston, etc., took into their service bands of players, whom they generally allowed to give public performances at their expense and always under their control. The smaller towns, as it seems, annually invited companies of players in order to gratify the popular taste for scenic representations. For instance, the unimportant town of Stratford, during the eighteen years between 1569 and 1587, was favoured twenty-four times by visits from companies of players who were paid by the corporation of the town. And in the small borough of Leicester theatrical performances were given almost regularly every year after 1561, by companies from London; in the year 1583 even by two companies simultaneously, as Kelly* has recently proved.

The universities were inspired by the same zeal for dramatic art. Of this we have evidence in the fact that in Oxford several plays were performed in June 1583 for the entertainment of a Polish prince who had been recommended to the attentions of the university by the Queen; these performances, moreover, were given under the direction of G. Peele, the well-known dramatic poet and older contemporary of Shakspeare's, who no doubt also, at his request, wrote those so-called pageants (allegorical dramatic scenes) which, according to ancient custom, were represented in the streets of London in honour of the Lord Mayor's entry upon office in 1585 and 1591.† As certain as the honourable mayors and aldermen of London, Coventry, Chester, etc., did not belong to the *jeunesse dorée* of the England of Shakspeare's day, nor to the class of bargemen, sailors, mechanics, etc., as certain is it that Shakspeare's public did not consist merely of those portions of the public described by Rümelin. And certain as it is that dramatic representations were popular throughout England, and that the plays of the London

* *Notices Illustrative of the Drama and other Popular Amusements*, etc. London, 1865.

† A. Dyce: *The Works of R. Greene and G. Peele*, pp. 326, 334, 336.

stage were made known to the country by companies of players on their provincial tours, so certain is it that Shakspeare's plays during his lifetime enjoyed a reputation beyond that which they had won from the London public. But Shakspeare's name also, which as we have seen was at least reckoned among the notables in London, doubtless gradually acquired fame and celebrity in wider circles. This is attested by the many (quarto) editions of his most popular plays printed during his lifetime, and assuredly not purchased merely by the '*jeunesse dorée*' and the rabble of London; it is further supported by the great number of other plays that were published with his name by booksellers greedy of gain, evidently on account of their popularity. This is more particularly confirmed by the fact that Shakspeare's works—and, moreover, of all the dramatic productions of the day, his alone—were collected after his death, and printed in the well-known folio of 1623;* further, that this edition found so rapid a sale that it was sold out in nine years, and a new one issued as early as 1632.† This circumstance, occurring as it did in such agitated times when so little was read, proves, I think, more than a hundred other facts that Shakspeare's name was not only known and celebrated in London, but that it had gradually become famous throughout England.

All the more necessary it is to give some account of the increasing reputation acquired by B. Jonson and the poets of his School, which is no less an established fact.

* The vain Ben Jonson had indeed himself made a collection of his poetical works, but we are not told that a second edition was required: and the edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays which appeared in 1647 was, as the editor (Shirley) remarks, called for by the closing of all the theatres and to make up for the want of dramatic performances which it was no longer possible to give.

† This second folio edition is not, as has generally been supposed, a mere careful reprint of the first, made by the printer. The editor gives proofs of having seriously endeavoured to correct the more important misprints of the edition of 1623, and has done this with discrimination and thought, especially as regards the rhythm. Only, his corrections as frequently affect what was right as what was wrong. Moreover, the whole edition is extremely carelessly printed, even scarcely less carelessly than the first. Compare in regard to this point the valuable remarks of Tycho Mommsen: *Shakspeare's Romeo und Julie. Eine kritische Ausgabe*, etc. (Oldenburg, 1859), p. 72 ff.

This was due partly to the character of the poetry of the Ben Jonson School, partly to the spirit of the age, which after the accession of James, had become more and more associated with that style of poetry. I have already discussed the principal features of these two tendencies.* And, as we have seen, it was neither the higher æsthetic standpoint nor the higher classic-artistic culture of these poets that threw Shakspeare's plays into the shade. For although Ben Jonson laid great stress upon this, I nevertheless think that I have clearly shown how far his writings are removed from the ancient ideal of art, and from the formal finish of the classic drama; and Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger, in this respect, made more of a step backwards than forwards. The reason of Shakspeare's works being temporarily cast into the shade, and Ben Jonson's exalted, is rather to be found in the spirit of the more modern age, in the struggle against the mediæval and popular side of the Shakspearian drama, and in the transition of the theatre from a national into a Court theatre. The spirit of the nation became more and more divided into sharp contrasts; one side was formed by the Court, the nobles and the clergy, the other by the people, more particularly by the higher classes of the commoners and the lower clergy, among whom Puritanism daily took deeper root. The former party had joined the Reformation in the spirit of Henry VIII., that is, more from a *political* point of view. As Henry had introduced it merely in order to free himself personally and politically from the papal yoke, so his whole party did not so much regard the Reformation as a new principle of religious and moral life, but as a mere outward modification of ecclesiastical and political conditions, by which the supremacy of the Pope was transferred to the King and his bishops, from Rome to London and Canterbury. The principle remained essentially the same; autocracy of the King and of the bishops, secular power, splendour and luxury, supported by all the means of mental culture and an inclination for the outward and refined enjoyments of life. Such were the elements which, since the 15th century had, so to say, made Rome itself antiquated, and

* Vol. i. p. 227 f; 292 ff.

which had led the whole party towards antiquity and classic art. It was to this party that Puritanism stood in the most direct opposition. For not only was it wholly in earnest in regarding the Reformation as a new principle of life, but at the same time so exaggerated this principle that it in reality became wholly different, and the Reformation in its hands was converted into a Revolution. Puritanism broke away entirely from the past, and wished to make the present a new beginning; sixteen hundred years were to be erased from the page of history. A new world and a new history was to be begun with the simplicity of the apostolic era—self-government of the community, with the aid of the Holy Ghost; thus a republican form of the state was the necessary consequence of this principle, which gained a great number of sympathisers among the aspiring middle classes and among the great body of the people, owing to their dissatisfaction with the lame government of the Stuarts. As Puritanism cast overboard all the mental culture that had until then been acquired, and opposed the theatre with all the venom of fanaticism, dramatic art was compelled to join the hostile party in the great struggle which broke out in the reign of Charles I. Accordingly, the spirit of this party essentially influenced its further development.

The first consequence of this influence and of the division in the spirit of the nation, was that the theatre ceased to be a national theatre. Ben Jonson's masques* were exclusively aristocratic, and quite beyond both the taste and the means of the national theatre, owing to their allegorical setting, their learned allusions, their personal references, and the magnificence of the costumes and scenery. And although they were not wanting in spirit and wit, nor in a certain poetic halo (which at least surrounded the better masques), still they were essentially mere spectacular pieces, feasts for the eyes and ears, plays for social entertainment, devoid of that deep seriousness

* This inferior style of art was specially pleasing to Jonson's mind; in fact, he may be said to be the inventor of masques, in so far as he was the first to make them favourite and fashionable articles, which were in such great request at court and with the nobility throughout the whole seventeenth century, as almost to supplant the drama proper.

which in true art always lies concealed beneath the exterior of the play and of the amusement afforded. They not only caused the first schism in the hitherto popular form and the national spirit of the drama, and by their inserted songs and dances not only prepared the way for the opera, that artificial production, reared in the hot-houses of learned and aristocratic culture, but, inasmuch as they reflected B. Jonson's style in its most brilliant and attractive side, they called forth that style of poetry which may, with Samuel Johnson, be termed the metaphysical, provided that by metaphysical we understand not so much the super-natural as the contra-natural and the un-natural. For poets and versifiers such as Suckling, Waller, Denham, and Cowley—who occasionally also wrote plays, and of whom Cowley particularly enjoyed the high favour of the æsthetic 'cavaliers'—so exaggerated Ben Jonson's learned, artificial, and constrained style, as to make it unnatural and absurd. Waller and Denham, at the same time, endeavoured at least to make the language and versification more refined. Suckling and Cowley, on the other hand, were as careless in this respect as only popular poets can venture to be; all the greater were their efforts to produce artificially perverted thoughts, far-fetched and trite similes, and a constrained mode of expression overflowing with learned reminiscences.

This style of taste, which had taken root in court-regions as early as the reigns of James and Charles I., had however acquired but a limited degree of consideration, and did not reach its culminating point till after the Restoration, inasmuch as Shakspeare, and with him Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, Ford, and Shirley, and the rest of the old popular dramatists, still maintained their ascendancy, not only on the popular stage but also in the theatre of the Court. The popular theatre in fact ceased to exist during, and in consequence of, the Revolution—a period of twenty years, during which the theatres were, indeed, only for a short time entirely closed, but during which the representations were given in secret and often interrupted, and more improvised on the occasion, than acted. The excited state of political and religious passions, the subversion of all relations, civil war, regicide and the

iron rule of a Cromwell, were circumstances powerful enough to crush in the people their old love and custom for theatrical entertainments. The various companies of players had been disbanded, for all the younger members of society who were able to wield the sword had followed the King to the war, and been either killed or crippled, while the older men had died during the struggle or become decrepit.* In short, the bond which for centuries had bound the people to dramatic art had snapt asunder both inwardly and outwardly, and the succeeding period was not adapted to restore the old order of things.

The nation, which had been oppressed under Cromwell's despotism, rejoiced at the prospect of the restoration of the monarchy. But the representative of this monarchy was a Stuart, a Charles II., an intellectual, but weak and dissolute man, who as far surpassed his prototype and confederate, *le grand monarch*, in all his bad qualities, as the latter surpassed him in his few good points. With him the theatre rose again, but simply as the drama of the Court. Two companies, under the direction of Sir William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew, obtained the privilege by a letter-patent from Charles in 1662, to play in the only two theatres which London possessed till 1695; they, however, stood under the autocratic control of the Lord Chamberlain, and therefore were of course governed by Court-taste. This taste had, during Charles's long sojourn in France, come to favour the French dramatic style, which, as early as the sixteenth century, had formed itself upon classic models and was just then celebrating its first triumphs in the works of Corneille and Molière. It was there also that Davenant became acquainted with the custom of regularly furnishing the stage with moveable decorations, which up to that time were still unknown in the English popular theatres; these

* Accordingly, the 'stage-tradition' which reached down to the days of Shakspeare, and to which lately appeal has been made in regard to the scenic representation of Shakspeare's plays and to the conception of their principal characters, has therefore, I think, only a very limited application; nay, it is doubtful whether, in fact, it can be accepted at all, inasmuch as the political revolution in the reign of Charles II. was followed by a theatrical revolution, which, it seems to me, broke away almost as completely from the past as the political revolution had done.

he introduced into the theatre opened by him with the same degree of correctness that he aimed at in his dramatic works.

This striving after French correctness, the influence of the metaphysical style of poetry, and Beaumont's and Fletcher's mode of characterisation and composition as a foundation, were the dominant elements in dramatic art from the time of the Restoration to the end of the century. The four chief representatives of this style, besides Davenant and Killigrew, and other less distinguished poets, were: *John Dryden*, an adept in verse-making and fine speeches, whose principal aim was elegant language and so-called beautiful thoughts, more a writer of lyrics than a dramatist; in comedy tedious and indelicate, in tragedy filling the place unoccupied by true pathos, with reflections, high-sounding phrases and forced emphases; invariably pleasing, but also invariably wanting in power and character. *Thomas Shadwell*, Dryden's rival in politics and literature, but not as distinguished as the latter, a clever and ready writer, who chiefly wrote comedies, had taken Ben Jonson as his model, and, in accordance with the ideas of the time, had endeavoured to improve upon him, without however succeeding in approaching his prototype. *Nathaniel Lee*, Shadwell's younger and, so to say, his complementary rival, who wrote tragedies only, generally on antique subjects; a poet of greater talent than either Shadwell or Dryden, and with a decidedly poetical turn of mind and drastic energy. He was pretty well unaffected by the French influence, it is true, and followed more in Shakspeare's footsteps, but his over-sensitive imagination passed the bounds of reason, not only in his works but in his conduct in life (he was four years in Bedlam). Lastly, *Th. Otway*, the most distinguished of all, born in Trotton, in Sussex, in 1651, and died in the most abject poverty in 1685, having lived a dissolute life. His better tragedies, especially 'The Orphan' and 'Venice Preserved,' can stand comparison with most of Massinger's, Beaumont's, and Fletcher's works, nay, perhaps even surpass these in true dramatic form of language, in power, and truth to nature, and in the expression of feeling and emotion. He, too, worked in the old English style, but had no depth of

thought and greatness of mind, no feeling for the organic rounding of the subject, and therefore is generally diffuse and inconsistent in his delineation of character, careless in his motives, arbitrary in composition, and with no idea of the ethical effect of the drama; he may be said to be the Massinger of his day, whom the Restoration called back into life, as Shadwell may be said to represent an 'improvement upon' Ben Jonson, and Lee a mad Shakspeare. Connected with the above poets are *Wycherley*, *Congreve*, *Vanbrugh*, and *Farquhar*, as the most gifted and most popular writers of comedy towards the end of the century, but they are filled with the frivolous, immoral, licentious spirit which proceeded from the Court of Charles II. and his successors. They were eminently ingenious, humorous, and lifelike in their writings, and distinguished for the rich variety of their characters—which have more the form of portraits, and were generally satirical—and for their clever management of the action and drastic treatment of the dialogue; but were offensively obscene, by representing the loosest immorality in the most bare-faced manner; they did not possess either nobility of sentiment, or any appreciation for that higher beauty which alone raises art above the low apeing of common reality.

No wonder, therefore, that Shakspeare even though not entirely forgotten, did not enjoy any great consideration in those circles where the above-mentioned poets reaped such decided success and applause.

And yet, immediately upon the reopening of the theatres, a new edition of Shakspeare's works was made and appeared in 1664; this was a mere reprint of the second folio with the orthography modernised, and with the addition of seven plays, only the smaller number of which—as we have seen—were justly ascribed to Shakspeare. Twenty-one years later a new edition was again issued, no doubt because, in spite of its many defects, the last was sold out, and Shakspeare's works were still in demand. That this demand continued after 1685 into the eighteenth century, is proved by Rowe's edition of Shakspeare, issued in 1709, in seven octavo volumes (a second edition of which appeared in 1714, not five years afterwards), and

by the long series of independent editions of Shakspeare, more or less critical in character, which followed Rowe's last edition at short intervals during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These facts clearly prove, as Ch. Knight* justly maintains, that ignorance and misapprehension alone could have given rise to the current opinion that Shakspeare's works had gradually become wholly forgotten; the above facts show, on the contrary, that Shakspeare has at all times—although with fluctuations—enjoyed a popularity with the English people, greater almost than that of any other poet.

But it was by the people alone that he was held in this continued favour. In the opinion of learned critics, and in the circles of the Court and the aristocracy, Shakspeare sank far below the level of that esteem and honour which he had occupied in the estimation of his contemporaries. For while Milton—the only mind kindred to Shakspeare's own during the seventeenth century—speaks of him in a poem prefixed to the second folio of 1632, as—

‘ Dear son of memory, great heir of fame
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou, in our wonder and astonishment,
Hast built thyself a live-long monument.’

and again in 1645, in his ‘L’Allegro’ calls him—

‘ Our sweetest Shakspeare, fancy's child,’

James Shirley, in the prologue to his drama ‘The Sisters,’ which appeared in 1640, says that Shakspeare, who at one time had been so great a favourite, has now but few friends; J. Tateham, also, an unimportant versifier in the metaphysical style, calls him (in a poetic encomium to R. Brome's ‘Jovial Crew of Merry Beggars,’ 1652), ‘the plebeian driller,’ by which epithet he evidently meant to say that Shakspeare's plays at that time found favour only with the people. The author of the ‘*Historia Histrionica: an Historical Account of the English Stage, etc.*’ (London, 1699), in enumerating the plays performed during the last decades before the Revolution, mentions

* *Studies of Shakspeare*, p. 505 ff.

of Shakspeare's only 'Henry IV.,' 'Hamlet' and 'Othello,' among a great number of pieces by Ben Jonson, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher; and Dryden, in speaking of the two latter, says, 'their plays are now the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage, two of theirs being acted through the year for one of Shakspeare's.' The play during the representation of which, in the winter of 1648, the theatre was attacked by soldiers, and the actors and the public dispersed, was Beaumont and Fletcher's 'The Bloody Brother.' The performance with which Davenant, in 1656, opened his so-called 'Entertainments' in Routland's House, was an operetta in the style of the time, a masque furnished with music; the play with which he opened the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, after the Restoration, was one of his own productions, 'The Siege of Rhodes' Killigrew's company also inaugurated their new house in Drury Lane, in 1662, with Beaumont's and Fletcher's 'Humorous Lieutenant,' and in 1695, the famous Betterton as director of the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, began with Congreve's 'Love for Love.'

Accordingly, after the Restoration, Shakspeare's plays were still performed, it is true however, not only comparatively seldom, but what was worse, they were generally not given in their original form,—in fact, they were remodelled to suit the taste of the age. Thus *The Tatler*, a daily paper to which Addison was a contributor, on one occasion quotes some lines from 'Macbeth,' but from Davenant's distorted version of the drama; and N. Tate, in the dedication to his edition of 'King Lear,' as acted at the Duke's Theatre, *revived with alterations*, calls the original, an old piece with which he had become acquainted through a friend. Most of Shakspeare's plays were revised in this manner, by more or less unskilful hands, during the years between 1665 and 1740. Davenant and Dryden began with 'The Tempest,' which was printed in 1670; Davenant then proceeded with 'Measure for Measure,' 'Much Ado About Nothing,' and 'Macbeth' (the two former appeared in 1673, the latter in 1674); 'Antony and Cleopatra,' in 1677, fell into Sedley's hands; 'Timon of Athens' in 1678 into Shadwell's. Tate, after putting 'King Lear' to rights, did the same also with 'Henry VI.'

'Richard II.' and 'Coriolanus;' his version of the latter appeared in 1682. 'Cymbeline' was remodelled and printed in the same year by Durfey; 'Titus Andronicus' in 1667 by Ravenscroft; 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' in 1692, by an anonymous writer; 'The Taming of the Shrew,' in 1698, by Lacy; 'Henry IV.' and 'Richard III.' in 1710 by Betterton and Cibber, etc. All these versions are essentially the same in character; as a rule, only such passages as were most effective on the stage were left unaltered, but in all cases the editors endeavoured to expunge the supposed harshnesses of language and versification; powerful passages were tamed down and diluted, elegant passages embellished, tender passages made more tender; the comic scenes were provided with additional indelicacies, and it was further endeavoured to make the aim of the action more correct by the removal of some supposed excrescences, or by the alteration of the scenic arrangement and the course of the action. Davenant had even furnished 'Macbeth' and 'The Tempest' with music, songs, and dances, and was so successful with this species of barbaric ornamentation, and with his own so-called operas and decorations, that he succeeded in eclipsing Killigrew's company, which had hitherto outstripped him in the public favour.

The opinion which is expressed upon Shakspeare, in this maltreatment of his plays by dramatic poets and directors of theatres, is expressly corroborated in the works of the leading æsthetic critics of the day. Denham (in his Ode upon the Death of Cowley, 1667) speaks in commendation of Shakspeare, but as far inferior to 'immortal' Cowley; we quote the passage:

'By Shakspeare's, Jonson's, Fletcher's lines,
Our stage's lustre Rome's outshines.

* * * * *

Old Mother Wit and Nature gave
Shakspeare and Fletcher all they have;
In Spencer and in Jonson, Art
Of slower Nature got the start.
But both in him (Cowley) so equal are,
None knows which bears the happiest share.'

Edward Philipps, the nephew and pupil of Milton, speaks of Shakspeare in even higher terms of admiration: in his

'Theatrum Poetarum,' 1675, he calls him 'the Glory of the English stage;' yet in his preface he speaks of Shakspeare's 'unfiled expressions, his rambling and undigested fancies, the laughter of the critical,' but adds, that in spite of these failings he 'must be confess't a poet above many that go beyond him in literature some degrees.'

Dryden * in a similar manner speaks of Shakspeare as a man 'who of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously but luckily: when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learn'd; he needed not the spectacles of Books to read Nature; he look'd inwards and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid, his comick wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. . . . However, others are now generally preferred to him, yet the age wherein he lived, which had contemporaries with him, Fletcher and Jonson never equall'd them to him in their esteem. And in the last King's Court, when Ben's reputation was at its highest, Sir John Suckling, and with him the greater part of the courtiers, set our Shakspeare far above him.' Dryden—as his remarks on Shakspeare clearly prove—was, as a poet, powerfully attracted by him and an enthusiastic admirer of his; but it is equally clear from his remarks that, as a critic, he looked upon him in quite a different light, expressly pointing out the invariable irregularity of Shakspeare's plays, regretting that he did not know of, or at least rarely observed the Aristotelian laws of the three unities, and expressing his surprise that the plays should nevertheless produce so powerful an effect.

Thomas Rymer †—who likewise based his views upon

* *Essay on Dramatic Poesie*, 1668.

† *The Tragedies of the Last Age, Considered and Examined by the Practice of the Ancients*, 1678, and *A Short View of Tragedy, its Original Excellency and Corruption, with some Reflexions on Shakspeare*, etc., 1693.

these supposed laws and their irrevocable validity, and was enamoured of the beauty of the ancient drama—was the next to subject Shakspeare's tragedies to a critical examination, and this was almost equivalent to utter condemnation. He declares 'Othello' to be a 'bloody farce without salt or savour,' and says that 'in the neighing of a horse, or in the growling of a mastiff there is a meaning, there is a lively expression, and, may I say, more humanity, than many times in the tragical flights of Shakspeare.' In Rymer's judgment, almost everything in Shakspeare's plays is so wretched, that, in fact, he is surprised how critics could condescend to honour so wretched a poet with critical discussions. In defence of the abused poet, thus attacked by the fanatical criticism of a man blinded by his preference for the ancients, appeared John Dennis,* and Charles Gildon.† But their standpoint is in reality the same. They simply accuse Rymer of carrying the matter too far in his anger at the veneration paid to Shakspeare by his admirers; this is a new proof that their number, even though consisting of the people, must have been great, or have again commenced to increase. They deny that Shakepeare's plays possess any excellences, any wealth in profound and ingenious sentences, or truth to nature, originality, force and beauty of diction, etc.; and place him far below the ancients in all essential points—in composition, invention, characterisation, in short, far inferior to them in 'poetical art.' Dennis censures Shakspeare more particularly for having paid no heed to 'poetical justice,' and adds, 'the good and the bad perishing promiscuously in the best of Shakspeare's tragedies, there can be either none or very weak instruction in them.' Gildon also remarks that Shakspeare follows some of the dramatic rules with such skill that one is involuntarily carried away by his plays, but that he as frequently ignores and violates the rules. Hence that his beauties are buried beneath a heap of ashes, isolated and fragmentary like the ruins of a temple, that there is no harmony in them. In short, Shakspeare, he thinks, is not

* *The Impartial Critic, or Some Observations on Mr. Rymer's late book, etc.*, 1693.

† *Miscellaneous Letters and Essays*, 1694.

correct, not classic, because he possessed but a very superficial acquaintance with the ancient poets.

There was, however, no need for this critical opposition to Shakspeare's admirers; at least the dramatic art of the day ran but small risk of becoming too much affected by Shakspeare's genius. It is true that Jeremy Collier, in 1697, published a pamphlet* glowing with Puritanical zeal against the obscenities of Congreve, Vanbrugh and others; and although these dramatists, together with Dryden, Dennis, etc., defended their cause with humour and ingenuity, still the public voice in general sided with the aggressors. After the Stuarts had been driven off the throne, and it had been ascended by the rigidly moral, coldly rational William, not only did the moral and religious spirit of the people, but the ethical and æsthetic feelings of cultured minds also, rebel against that licentiousness which set all morality at defiance, as well as against Lee's eccentricities and Otway's senseless and arbitrary proceedings. However, the clever coarseness of Congreve's comedies gave way only to make room for the senseless shallowness of the Italian opera, for the childish delight in splendid decorations and foreign songs and dances, partly also for the sober regularity of the classics. The French taste, or rather the classics according to the French cut, continued so decidedly to gain predominance that it completely displaced the old English elements of dramatic art, that is, the fundamental type of the drama according to Shakspeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, which, in spite of the striving after correctness, had until then been preserved.

Poets like Thomas Southern, who, next to Lee, was the best tragic writer of the day, encouraged this taste, in so far as comic parts were introduced into scenes of the highest tragic pathos in so unconnected and discordant a manner that they could not but have a disturbing effect, all the more so as their idea of the comic was not Shakspeare's deep humour, but consisted of low jokes and obscene farces. Lee in his eccentricity, on the other hand, converted Shakspeare's pathos, his force of passion,

* *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage.*

his fulness of subject-matter, his variety in the change of scenes, in short, all the most characteristic features of the old English theatre, into pure caricature. As early as the seventh decade, therefore, Rymer made an attempt to introduce French tragedy. In 1678 appeared his tragedy, 'King Edgar or the English Monarch,' which is worked out quite in accordance with the French classic models, but is so undramatic, prosaic, and tedious, that it passed without producing any effect. However, towards the end of the seventeenth and at the beginning of the eighteenth century translations from the French (of Corneille, Racine, Deschamps, Molière and others) continued on the increase, and already created more effect. Dennis, Gildon, and others, through their criticisms spread the notion of the exclusive æsthetic value of the classic drama, and of the so-called Aristotelian rules. Addison's 'Cato' (1713) confirmed and finished what had been prepared even by Ben Jonson's 'Catiline.' After Addison had proved that the English language was as able as the French to supply the place of action by long rhetorical speeches, and to moralise as tediously, as pathetically, and as sentimentally, and to be as diffuse, as frosty, and as unnatural, in short, as correct as the French, the supremacy of the French classic style gained decided ascendancy. In place of tragedies like those of Beaumont and Fletcher's, and Dryden's, etc., there appeared those of Ambrose Philips, Aaron Hill, J. Hughes, L. Theobald, Thomson and others; and in place of comedies in the style of Ben Jonson, Shadwell, Congreve, etc., those of Charles Johnson, Fielding, Cibber, and others, which were all worked upon French models, the comedies more or less in the style of Molière.* It surely cannot be maintained that this change was a favourable one. On the contrary, the works of Otway and Lee, of Dryden, Shadwell and Congreve, as compared with the dramatic productions of the eighteenth century may be said to resemble a rich, late summer of the flourishing age of Shakspeare, as opposed to a barren winter.

* Of course the differences of style in the domain of comedy was not so distinctly marked, for the old English comedies of intrigue and Molière's comedies were much more nearly allied than Shakspeare's tragedies and those of Racine.

CHAPTER II.

SHAKSPEARE DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

THE period during which the French taste predominated was nevertheless the very period during which the fame of Shakspeare and the interest in his works again made considerable progress. Periods that are poor in production, periods of reflection and criticism, not only give rise to the imitation of foreign writers, but generally also induces the nation to take a more lively interest in its own literature of the past. Addison's and Steele's favourable criticisms of Shakspeare, which they published in their celebrated paper, 'The Spectator,' notwithstanding their preference for the French classical style, startled the admirers of the real classics, and hence it was perhaps they who more especially contributed to spread the interest in Shakspeare's works in circles of learned culture.

It was about this time that *Nicholas Rowe* published his edition of Shakspeare. Rowe was himself a popular writer of tragedies, whose inaccuracies were indeed censured, but who in fact possessed more appreciation for genuine poetry than poetic talent (as his preference for Shakspeare proves); however, his writings were nevertheless favourably received on account of the elegance of his diction and the flowing gracefulness of his verse. His already-mentioned edition of Shakspeare is the first critical and correctly printed edition, and owing to its intrinsic merits and its more convenient form was well fitted to supplant the four folios, the only editions until then published. Rowe had also collected data and traditions concerning the life of Shakspeare, and arranged a biography of the poet, which is prefixed to his works. Rowe, it is true, fully acknowledges the validity of the Aristotelian rules, and in regard to æsthetics he throughout favours the taste prevailing in his day, but remarks that 'it

would be hard to judge him (Shakspeare) by a law which he knew nothing of,' and excuses him for not having observed these rules on account of his having 'lived in a state of almost universal licence and ignorance.' Rowe's edition is still very defective, for it is based upon the text of the last folio of 1685, and the latter, although, comparatively speaking, correctly printed, had by no means wholly avoided the carelessness, the slovenliness, and incorrectness of the print of the three earlier editions. Again, although Rowe maintains, in the dedication to the Duke of Somerset, that he had compared the various old editions with one another, and thus, as far as he was able, restored the correct readings, still he had evidently not done this, and thinking that the question consisted merely about misprints, has only corrected corrupted passages as he thought fit. However, these corrections are often very happy, and were suggested by fine poetical tact. The traditions he collected in regard to Shakspeare's life are not only most valuable to us, but likewise brought the person of the poet nearer to the people of Rowe's own day. The public troubled themselves as little about his æsthetic judgment as about his critical procedure, but were glad to possess a better, more convenient and cheaper edition of Shakspeare, and thanked him by making a great demand for his work.

The appearance of this edition, in spite of its imperfection, marks a second period in the history of the Shakspearian drama. The taste of the age and the principles of æsthetic criticism, it is true, long remained devoted to the French classic style, but the large number of new editions which each in its way endeavoured, so to say, to conciliate the spirit of the age with Shakspeare's works, sufficiently proves that a change in the mind and the taste of the nation was preparing; this change in the course of time gradually became distinctly apparent, and led the drama from the French classic style back to that of Shakspeare. It was in this spirit of conciliation that *Pope*—who perceived the insufficiency of Rowe's edition—formed the ambitious resolve to win for himself an everlasting name as an art-critic and literary-historian, and at the same time to honour the immortal poet, by

publishing an undying edition of his works. This edition, after pompous advertisements, appeared in 1725, in six quarto volumes, and was republished in various forms in 1728, 1766, and in 1768. The edition proved to be anything but undying, inasmuch as it was very soon supplanted by that issued by Lewis Theobald. For Pope—as he himself afterwards gives us to understand—had, in his poetic geniality, made but a very hasty and imperfect comparison of the two folios with the then existing old quartos; in many instances he made arbitrary innovations in Shakspeare's plays to suit his own taste, and on the other hand left much unaltered that required critical restoration, as L. Theobald * has irrefutably proved.

Still, an edition of Shakspeare by Pope was an event, for he then stood in the zenith of his poetical celebrity, and was considered the first English poet of the day, nay, Voltaire even declared him to be the greatest of all living poets. His name, united with Shakspeare's, threw a lustre upon the latter which made him appear in a better light to that circle of scholars, critics, and men of genius who favoured the classic style. It was Pope, as already observed, who, in conjunction with Lord Burlington, Dr. Mead, and Martin, collected, by public subscription, the money for the monument which was erected to Shakspeare in Westminster Abbey, in 1741. In short, it may be said that Pope essentially contributed to the general honour and esteem which in our own day is paid to Shakspeare's name wherever the English language is spoken—we may add, wherever also the German tongue is known. This probably weighs more in Pope's favour than his light verses and his equally light thoughts.

And yet Shakspeare's genius was still far from being properly understood and appreciated. Pope, in his 'Essay on Criticism,' speaks in ready praise of Dryden, Denham, Waller and others, but has not one word in commendation of Shakspeare. This alone clearly characterises the standpoint of his æsthetic judgment. In the preface to his edition he does indeed speak in the highest praise of Shakspeare's plays, but the refrain is ever 'he is not

* *Shakspeare Restored, or a Specimen of the many Errors as well Committed as Unamended, by Mr. Pope, etc., London, 1726.*

correct, not classic, he has almost as many defects as beauties; his dramas want plan, or, at least, are extremely defective and irregular in construction; he keeps the tragic and the comic as little apart as he does the different epochs and nations in which the scenes of his plays are laid; the unity of action, of place and of time is violated in every scene, etc. These defects Pope, it is true, attributes partly to the bad taste of Shakspeare's age, to the defective state of the stage, and to his not having known the rules of criticism, partly also to the editors of Shakspeare's works. However, in these excuses we have but the reflex of Pope's own conceit and that of his age, which still cherished the belief that it was far superior to the days of Shakspeare. This also explains the boldness of Pope's corrections of Shakspeare, a boldness in which the next editors, if possible, even surpassed him.

Lewis Theobald's edition appeared in 1733 (in seven volumes), and was subsequently re-published several times; he, it is true, took much trouble in comparing the earlier prints both of the folios and of the various quartos. But, on the one hand, he did not examine all the quartos, and formed too high an estimate of the trustworthiness of the first folio, and, on the other, although expressly boasting of his great reading, he did not possess either sufficient historical or literary knowledge to be quite competent for his task. Lastly, like Pope, he did not sufficiently respect the words of the poet whose works he was editing. And as, moreover, he was not endowed with any very great amount of acumen and poetical taste, it happened but too often that he altered passages which he did not understand, or, for some reason considered corrupt, and without further hesitation admitted his corrections into the text. More crazy still in this respect were the proceedings of *Sir Thomas Hanmer* and Pope's friend and admirer, *Bishop Warburton*. The former, whose splendid edition was printed at the Oxford University Press (in six quarto volumes), and appeared first in 1744 and again in 1770-71, based his text upon that of Theobald's, occasionally improved it, but corrupted it still more by making numerous corrections which he

adopted wherever a passage seemed obscure or defective, or by interpolating a number of patch-words in order to make the versification quite correct; this he has done to such an extent that, when looking at his version, we can no longer imagine that we have Shakspeare before us, but a modern teller-of-syllables, *à la* Pope or Dryden. And again Warburton, whose edition appeared in 1747 in eight volumes, and is founded on Pope's text—although unsparing in his attack upon Theobald and Hanmer, and although free from the mania of making Shakspeare's versification pure and correct—proceeded in other points in a manner much worse than Hanmer. For he was as full of self-conceit and self-confidence as he was wanting in poetical mind and critical judgment, and hence unhesitatingly erased and altered whatever did not accord with his own æsthetic feeling.*

The same arrogance is reflected in the often exceedingly free and recklessly mutilated versions of Shakspeare's works, which not merely continued to be brought on the stage, but were even printed together with new editions of the original. Thus, for instance, 'The Merchant of Venice' was brought out at the theatre of Lincoln's Inn Fields, in a version made by Lord Lansdowne, furnished with music and other inappropriate ornamentation, enriched with a musical masque, 'Peleus and Thetis,' and with a banqueting scene, in which the Jew, who is dining at a separate table, gives a toast to his beloved Money; the character of Shylock is degraded into the clown of the play; in short, the whole is so distorted that it is inconceivable, not only how it could have found acceptance in this shape, but that it should have maintained an existence on the stage throughout several decades. Gildon mangled 'Measure for Measure' in a similar manner, and furnished it with 'musical entertainments;' this was printed in 1700. And not much later there appeared the following adaptations—'Richard III.' by Cibber (1700), 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' by Dennis (1702), 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' by Leveridge

* This has been proved by the excellent American critic, Richard Grant White, by numerous examples in his *Shakspeare's Scholar, being Historical and Critical Studies of his Text*, etc. London, 1854, p. 10 ff.

(1716), 'Coriolanus' by Dennis (1721), 'As You Like It' by Charles Johnson (1723), 'Julius Cæsar' by the Duke of Buckingham (1722), 'The Taming of the Shrew' by Worsdale (1736), 'Much Ado About Nothing' by J. Miller (1737), 'King John' by Cibber (1744), 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' by Lampe (1745), and many others. The Duke of Buckingham, for instance, had turned 'Julius Cæsar' into two tragedies with choruses, quite in accordance with the ancient style. Worsdale's version of 'The Taming of the Shrew,' ('A Cure for a Scold,') was a vaudeville; and Lampe trimmed 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' (under the title of 'The Fairies') into an opera, after the fashion of the age.

Garrick proceeded in a somewhat different manner with his adaptations and alterations of Shakspeare's plays. It was in the character of Richard III. that he had won his first celebrity as an actor (1741). Accordingly, he was doubtless aware of the great stage-effect produced by Shakspeare's dramas when played by good actors. Therefore, like his great predecessor, *Betterton*, he endeavoured to re-establish them upon the stage. This he succeeded in doing, but only by more or less remodelling the plays, and in all cases removing the free jokes, which the prudery of English audiences could no longer endure; these jokes may certainly, in part, be dispensed with, inasmuch as they merely reflect the manners of the Elizabethan age. Some of these adaptations have been published, and we can see from them in what a reckless manner even *Garrick* treated Shakspeare's masterpieces. For instance, in 'Romeo and Juliet' (1750), he summarily cut out Romeo's passion for Rosalinde, and gave the end the forced, pathetic point—found in *Bandello's* novel—of allowing Juliet to awake before Romeo has died of the poison. 'The Tempest' (1756) he furnished with songs, and transformed it into a species of opera. In the same year appeared his adaptation of 'The Taming of the Shrew,' under the title of 'Catherine and Petruchio,' in which the original play—owing to the omission, transposing, and contraction of several scenes—has dwindled down into a farce of three acts. 'The Winter's Tale' (1758), and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' (1763), were

treated in a similar manner. 'Cymbeline' (1761), and 'Hamlet' (1771), came off rather better.

We must, however, not overlook the fact that this mania for corrections on the part of editors and critics, as well as of dramatists and directors of theatres, had an honourable motive, in so far as, partly at least, it rested upon the honest belief that Shakspeare was a great poet, and that, accordingly, the many faults and defects met with in his dramas could not have originated with him, but with the corrupt state of the manuscripts which—as they thought—had been mutilated by alterations and additions on the part of actors, or by the carelessness, hurry, and uncertainty of compositors and editors. And, indeed, it is not only a well-known fact that the old quartos and folios were carelessly and incorrectly printed, but it is likewise probable enough that Shakspeare's plays, some at least, may have experienced various kinds of alterations, even in manuscript, from the unauthorised hand of the actor or manager to whose mercy they were left after Shakspeare's death.

But in spite of this belief, and in spite of the revival of Shakspeare's plays, nay, in spite of the Shakspeare Jubilee—which was arranged by Garrick, and celebrated with great pomp and general enthusiasm at Stratford, from the 6th to the 8th of September, 1769, and was, in part, repeated in London—there is but little trace of the effects of Shakspeare's genius upon the dramatic poetry of the day. Scarcely can we in Henry Brooke (born 1720, d. 1783)—one among a dozen dramatic poets—detect any real influence of the study of Shakspeare. The critics of his day accuse Brooke of a want of correctness of composition, as well as of a want of fluency, and elegance of language; but his diction is powerful and bold, his composition is indeed defective, but his better pieces—'The Earl of Westmoreland' (1741) and 'The Earl of Essex' (1760)—are infinitely more dramatic than most of the Frenchified productions of his contemporaries. His mind also, which is elevated by a spirit of patriotism and a noble thirst for freedom, has something of the manly, historical greatness of Shakspeare. However, his position was about as isolated as Milton's was in his day.

Upon the whole it may be said that with the commencement of the second half of the eighteenth century, and again the result of French influence, that public taste began to favour partly so-called *Petites Pièces* and partly moralising, sentimental plays from domestic life, together with melodramas, vaudevilles, or ballad operas. This taste was introduced by persons like George Lillo (a jeweller by trade, whose domestic tragedy, entitled 'George Barnwell,' appeared as early as 1731, and created a furore), and was more fully developed by poets like Edward Moore (whose 'Gamester,' in tearful sentimentality, surpasses all Iffland's pieces taken together), by R. Cumberland, Th. Hull, J. W. Richardson, Hugh Kelly, M. G. Lewis, Fr. Reynolds and others; whereas Rich. Brinsley Sheridan—the most distinguished dramatist of his day—may be said to have restored Congreve's style of comedies, but without his obscenities; they are likewise better in form, and more adapted to the manners and interests of the age.

How great the influence of the French taste still was, is best shown by the criticism of Shakspeare's plays, which the famous *Samuel Johnson* prefixed to his edition of the poet's works, and which have been adopted in most subsequent editions. Samuel Johnson, although favouring the moralising tendency of the plays from domestic life, and although sober and prosaic to a degree, was nevertheless unquestionably the most eminent critic of the eighteenth century, in the domain of æsthetics and more particularly of poetry. The appearance of his edition, therefore, may again be considered to mark a new epoch in the history of Shakspeare's plays. His criticisms—apart from the many decided errors in individual points, and especially his often entirely unfortunate emendations of the text of Shakspeare's works—give proof, upon the whole, not only of sound common sense, but also of a secret spring of poetical feeling, which usually remains concealed, but occasionally bursts forth and gives a fillip to his reasoning common sense. Even Johnson cannot quite rid himself of the unfortunate idea about correctness, and even though he partially overcame this prejudice—which gave rise to so much of the censure cast upon Shakspeare—still, he,

so to say, substitutes what he wanted in this respect either by erroneous comparisons between nature and art (comparing Shakspeare with the ancients), or by insinuating that the object of the drama is moral improvement and instruction. From this point of view he praises Shakspeare as the poet of nature above all others, and speaks of him as 'the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of the manners and customs of life' which the ancients beautified by art; and further says that 'from his works may be collected a system of civil and economical prudence.' Johnson also praises the great variety of his characters and of the passions he unfolds; he praises 'his adherence to the general nature of man, which to him was of more value than accidental, national, or temporary peculiarities;' he praises the power which Shakspeare exercises over the mind, and by which we are forced to laugh or to weep, or to remain calm in peaceful expectation, just as the poet pleases.

However, from this same standpoint, Johnson also brings forward all kinds of reproaches against Shakspeare which are more or less unfounded. His chief fault is said to be that 'he sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings, indeed, a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him . . . His plots are often so loosely formed that a very slight consideration may improve them, and so carelessly pursued that he seems not always fully to comprehend his own design . . . It may be observed that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When he found himself near the end of his work, and in view of his reward, he shortened the labour to snatch the profit. He therefore remits his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced and imperfectly represented.' Johnson then proceeds with his well-known censure that Shakspeare 'had no regard to distinction of time or place,' that Hector is found quoting Aristotle and 'the loves of Theseus and Hippolyta combined with the Gothic mythology of fairies.' Shak-

speare's comic scenes Johnson thinks but 'seldom very successful, his jests commonly gross, and their pleasantry licentious.' On the other hand, his tragedies—in regard to which, as Rymer also maintained, he was by nature less disposed and fitted—are said to seem 'constantly to be worse as his labour is more. The effusions of passion which exigence forces out, are for the most part striking and energetic; but whenever he solicits his invention, or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is tumour, meanness, tediousness and obscurity.' His style of narration is said to be affected 'with a disproportionate pomp of diction,' his 'declamations or set speeches, commonly cold and weak for his power of Nature,' and his best, tenderest, and most pathetic passages to be often destroyed by 'some idle conceit, or contemptible equivocation.'

It is in accordance with these principles that Johnson then forms his judgment of each separate play. Nevertheless, his criticisms must be regarded as marking an epoch. For Johnson was the first in England who ventured to defend Shakspeare for mixing the tragic and comic elements, and for disregarding the unities of place and of time. On this point he coincides—even as regards time—with Lessing, who, a few years previously, had commenced to cast his powerful shafts against the prevalence of French taste in Germany. But Johnson's apology cannot altogether be called a happy one: he defends the mixture of tragic and comic simply because it is in accordance with nature; and, as regards the Aristotelian rules, he maintains that Shakspeare's histories being neither tragedies nor comedies, are not subject to any of these laws, and in his other works he has well enough preserved the unity of action. This latter he considers the chief law, and alone indispensable; the unities of place and of time, on the other hand, of less value, not essential to a regular drama, and to be sacrificed to the higher beauties of variety and of instruction. Accordingly, Johnson did not hit the point in question, *i.e.*, the downright misapprehension of the Aristotelian rules upon which the French drama was based; the man destined to disclose this misapprehension was his great German contemporary, Lessing. However, Johnson fought with telling reasons

against the foolish prejudice that the unities of place and of time were inviolable laws, because the drama was supposed to produce an effect upon the spectators, only provided it was externally credible and seemed to correspond with real life. At all events, in his defence we have more independence of judgment and a higher æsthetic mind, than had until then been possessed by the professional critics of Shakspeare's works. And even though he at first produced but little or no effect—as the many attacks upon his criticisms prove—and again, even though the French taste was too deeply rooted * to fall at one blow, dealt by so uncertain a hand, still Johnson's attempt, like the first dawn of a new morning, heralded a brighter day for æsthetic criticism and for the poetical literature of England.

But the new era which begins with S. Johnson's edition—in spite of its many errors—does not only affect æsthetic criticism, but also the literary-historical treatment of Shakspeare's works. The manner in which the editors of Shakspeare had until then proceeded was, as already shown, invariably infected by the endeavour to make æsthetic improvements, and to make the poet more correct by corrections. Their starting-point was more that of *æsthetic* criticism (and moreover a false one), than the criticism of literary historians. This relation changed with Samuel Johnson. With him, and his immediate contemporaries, Capell and Steevens, begins the period of the *philological* criticism of Shakspeare's works. Johnson's edition,† it is true, only paved the way for this; his principles are better than their execution. For he himself regrets that he was unable to examine all the old quartos, and although, comparatively speaking, it is only rarely and with hesitation that he adopts mere conjectures, still his pedantic treatment of Shakspeare is intolerable, and hence we too frequently find him altering and patching passages from wholly untenable and personal motives. However, what he commenced, the principles which he

* Even so highly gifted and eminent a mind as David Hume's (*History of England*, 1767, vi. 131) still concurred wholly with the French taste.

† Published in London, 1765, in 8 vols.

established and which were supported by his generally recognised authority, were followed by Capell and Steevens, who had contemporaneously, and independently of one another, prepared an edition of Shakspeare's works based upon Johnson's principles, and these met with greater success.

George Steevens published his edition as early as 1766, under the title of 'Twenty of the Plays of Shakspeare, being the whole Number printed in Quarto,' etc., and it has essentially facilitated the labours of subsequent editors. *Edward Capell's* edition, entitled 'Mr. William Shakspeare, his Comedies, Histories, Tragedies, set out by himself in Quarto,' etc., appeared only two years later (1768, 10 vols.). This edition is worked out quite in accordance with the principles with which the philologists of the day were wont to edit the ancient classics. The text, which is restored with praiseworthy care from the first folio, contains corrections only in such passages where these two sources furnished no assistance. Yet Capell's edition, in many respects, is still very defective, partly owing to his having fallen into the opposite extreme, and clung with pedantic scrupulousness to the readings of the quartos, partly owing to his being more wanting in refined judgment than in the literary history and historical knowledge of Shakspeare's age. Consequently he was unable to find any distinction between the several quartos, which are of very different value. Still he considerably promoted the understanding of the text, by giving numerous historical, literary and linguistic notes and explanations. But, unfortunately, in form and substance his style was so obscure and heavy that it required other writers to gather up the treasures contained in his commentaries, so as to make them common property.

The defects and faults of Capell's edition were in part removed by the edition prepared by *Steevens* in conjunction with Johnson, but principally the work of the former, which appeared in 1773. The text of this edition is generally the same as Capell's, it is true, because he followed the same principles. Yet *Steevens'* edition may be called the more correct, partly because he possessed a

more refined judgment, and therefore applied the principles more correctly, partly because—by means of parallel passages from contemporaneous authors, and a number of others collected by himself and other writers—he was better able to purify the text of the old editions, better able to defend the selected readings, and—owing to his more extensive knowledge of the historical events, customs, and usages of Shakspeare's day—better able to explain doubtful passages. In Steevens and Johnson's second edition (1778) we have the names of no less than forty-seven different authors whose explanatory and critical notes had been incorporated. This is a proof of the zeal with which masters and men all contributed to Shakspearian literature. Among these, by the side of Tyrwhitt and Farmer, we already find the names of Malone, Reed and Warton. Tyrwhitt had published his learned 'Observations and Conjectures upon some Passages in Shakspeare' as early as 1766, and Farmer's celebrated 'Essay on the Learning of Shakspeare' appeared in 1767. Steevens' edition may therefore be regarded as a *variorum* edition, that is, as the first of that large series of editions which long continued on the increase, and the editors of which were not only anxious to present something new, but were more eager to prove themselves deserving of praise for having collected the explanatory remarks, critical disquisitions, emendations, conjectures, etc., from the most different authors. The necessary result of the gradual collection of such masses of material—which was often accumulated without having been satisfactorily sifted—was that the excessive abundance rendered itself useless, and became converted into poverty.

Unfortunately, Steevens subsequently left the path which he had entered upon in conjunction with Johnson, and contemporaneously with Capell, and which he had followed with decided success. In his edition of 1793, he expressly declares that he returned to the freer treatment of the text like the earlier editors, and therefore unhesitatingly admitted corrections wherever the text had no 'apparent meaning,' and the lines 'no decent flow.' This is the more to be regretted as Steevens was evidently the most gifted critic of the eighteenth century.

I shall pass over the edition issued by the publisher Bell, entitled 'Shakspeare's Plays as they are now Performed at the Theatres Royal in London, Regulated from the Prompt Book of each House,' etc. (8 vols. 1774), although it is interesting in so far as it shows in what a maimed and disfigured form Shakspeare's dramas were still played in Drury Lane and Covent Garden. I have already adduced several examples of the style of treatment they experienced for theatrical representation, and in a literary-historical respect Bell's edition is of no value. Equally unimportant are the editions of Ayscough (1784), of Jos. Rann (Oxford, 1786), and another edition by Bell (20 vols. 1788), in which he adopts the text of Steevens and Johnson's edition, and gives a large selection of notes from other editions, commentaries, etc.

The next edition of literary-historical importance is that of *Edmund Malone* (10 vols. 8vo. London, 1790; 2nd ed. 16 vols. 12mo. Dublin, 1794). Malone likewise pursued with great zeal, industry, and perseverance, the philologico-critical style,* as well as the literary-historical aims of his friend Steevens, with whom he at first, at least, worked in harmony. His edition is based upon a new and careful comparison of the best quartos with one another and with the two first folios. The text is revised accordingly, and although Malone's judgment of the value of the different quartos is not always the right one, and although he too did not command all the existing quartos, still he succeeded in making one step in advance with the restoration of the text which, owing to unfavourable circumstances, had been so variously mutilated and corrupted. Malone's services in criticism are coupled with the results of extensive literary and historical investigations; for his edition contains the first attempt of any value to determine the chronological order in which Shakspeare's plays appeared; it likewise gives the first noticeable criticism of the doubtful plays, more especially a long dissertation on the three parts of 'Henry VI.,' and further contains a historical account of the

* As is proved by his supplementary volume to Johnson's and Steevens' edition, containing Shakspeare's lyric poems and the seven doubtful plays which had been added to the third folio.

English stage, with the results of a number of new investigations, and a treatise on the relations between Shakspeare and Ben Jonson. He also gives an appropriate selection of the explanatory and critical notes from the various other editions. These literary efforts of Malone's, which he carried on with enthusiasm, deservedly won the consideration of all those capable of judging, and would have met with more success had he kept himself free from a certain pleasure in doubting, contradicting, and finding fault with his predecessors, and if his criticisms had not presented that inward uncertainty and want of connection which induce opposition, and warn readers to be careful in the perusal of his writings. He is unfortunately wanting in depth and acuteness of conception, and still more in the fine appreciation for the beautiful, and in poetical feeling; hence he does not possess any appreciation for what is beautiful in Shakspeare's works. Nevertheless his assertion that Shakspeare 'is much superior not only to Jonson and Fletcher—whom the bad taste of the last age from the time of the Restoration to the end of the century had set above him—but to all the dramatic poets of antiquity'—clearly proves how much the judgment of critics on Shakspeare, as compared with classic writers, had turned in his favour since the days of Sam. Johnson.

Steevens, in his edition of 1793, invariably refers to the results of Malone's criticisms and investigations, sometimes opposing, sometimes agreeing with him. It is this edition of Steevens, together with that of Malone, which subsequent editors have always made the foundation of their works; the cheaper editions generally reprinted the text only of Steevens' edition, more or less corrected, and almost all the other editions issued between the years 1793–1840 contain only single instances of more or less important improvements and additions. *Reed's* reproduction of Steevens' and Johnson's edition (1813, 21 vols.) and Malone's edition by *James Boswell* (1821, 21 vols.), both of which are worked out upon the same philologico-critical principles, likewise give, with the utmost completeness, the whole collective mass of the critical, commentary, literary, and historical apparatus which had even increased in extent since the days of Malone;

these are the two principal editions of the *variorum* series. Of the later editions deserving honourable mention we have, therefore, now only to allude to that of *Alexander Chalmers*, the author of Shakspeare's biography, the only complete one since Rowe's, and which has since been adopted or made use of by most subsequent editors. This edition appeared first in 1805, in 9 parts (re-issued in 1823), and gives evidence of thorough learning as well as of independent inquiry and fine critical judgment.

Of the commentators who, together with independent editors, contributed to criticism and literary history, there appeared by the side of Tyrwhitt—who has already been mentioned—Benjamin Heath ('A Revisal of Shakspeare's Text,' etc., 1765), Joseph Ritson ('Verbal Criticisms on the Text of Shakspeare,' 1783), John Monck Mason ('Comments of Steevens' Edition,' etc., 1785), E. H. Seymour ('Remarks critical, conjectural, and explanatory upon the Plays of Shakspeare,' 1805); and, at a later period, A. Becket, Zach. Jackson, and others. Their essays are all more or less deserving of notice in regard to the text and the better appreciation of Shakspeare's works. The only really eminent commentator among these, however, was *Francis Douce*, whose work, entitled, 'Illustrations of Shakspeare and of Ancient Manners,' etc., appeared in 1809, and was republished in 1839. He is among commentators—as R. Grant White observes—'what Malone is among editors; save that his volumes exhibit a wider range of knowledge and a more delicate and sympathetic apprehension of the peculiar beauties of Shakspeare, than Malone possessed.'

The literary-historical investigations of Steevens, Malone and their successors, soon became connected with efforts to save the remains of the early English stage from further decay. As early as 1744, the publisher, *R. Dodsley*—himself a dramatic poet, whose works were very highly esteemed by Pope—issued a collection of plays from the earlier dramatists of the seventeenth century which existed in single and rare prints, and were thus in danger of being lost. This work, which appeared under the title of 'A Select Collection of Old Plays,' etc. (12 vols. 1744), and which was originally undertaken solely for the author's

own pleasure, exhibited the defects of inexperienced criticism, and of that want of method which usually accompanies mere dilettanteism. In 1780, therefore, a new edition of it was made by J. Reed, in which he endeavoured to correct these faults. He cut out twelve of the plays, some because they had been specially reprinted in an edition of Massinger's works which appeared at that time, others because their claim to be preserved was but very small. In their place he admitted ten plays which were more intimately connected with Shakspeare's time, and were more entitled to preservation. (For similar reasons the editor of the latest edition of 1825 again exchanged four of the pieces for other four.) Reed also continued Dodsley's 'Sketch of the English Stage,' from the time of the Revolution (with which it closed) down to 1776, the year in which Garrick left the stage.

About the same time appeared *Warton's* 'History of English Poetry, from the close of the eleventh to the commencement of the eighteenth century' (3 vols. 4to., London, 1774-81), in which Shakspeare and dramatic poetry are treated somewhat like stepchildren, it is true, but which, owing to its sound learning, and an analysis of the principal works together with a number of specimens, was well suited to correct the judgment and clear up the nation's consciousness in regard to its literary treasures.—Connected with the above works are Malone's already-mentioned 'Historical Account of the English Stage,' and *Th. Percy's* 'Essay on the Origin of the English Stage, particularly the historical Plays of Shakspeare' (1793), which completed and amended the series.

CHAPTER III.

SHAKSPEARE DURING THE LATTER YEARS OF THE 18TH AND
THE FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

SOON after the appearance of Johnson's criticisms, the æsthetic method of viewing Shakspeare's plays took a different turn. *William Richardson*, in his 'Philosophical Analysis and Illustration of some of Shakspeare's Dramatic Characters' (1774), discussed the characters of Macbeth, Hamlet, Jacques, and Imogen, with acute and psychological understanding, but in a diffuse and moralising manner. This first attempt to bring into view Shakspeare's mode of characterisation by the fulness of the life, the unity, and the completeness, the ethical depth and the psychological consistency of his dramatic personages, met with so much success that it was soon followed by a great number of imitators. Nay, it may be said that Richardson founded an entirely new branch of Shakspearian literature, which struck such firm root in the taste of the English nation, that it soon grew into a mighty tree, which, up to the most recent times, has brought forth numerous blossoms and fruits, but unfortunately has been cultivated too one-sidedly.

Richardson's 'Analysis' was followed in 1777 by M. Morgan's 'Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff,' and one year later by his 'Modern Characters from Shakspeare, alphabetically arranged;' which, during the year of its first appearance, was republished no less than three times. In 1784, Richardson himself issued a continuation of his first work, under the title of 'Essays on Shakspeare's Dramatic Characters of Richard III., King Lear, and Timon of Athens;' and in 1785 was published *Th. Whately's* 'Remarks on some of the Characters of Shakspeare' (2nd ed., 1808; 3rd, 1839), against which Kemble directed his 'Macbeth Reconsidered: an Essay,

intended as an answer to part of the Remarks,' etc. (1790). These essays on the characters in Shakspeare could not fail to open the eyes of many, and give them a clearer insight into the dramatic construction of the poet's plays. People could not but perceive that characters like Macbeth and Othello formed, to a certain extent, complete dramas in themselves; at any rate, they must have begun to suspect that the many-sided development of such characters involved the inner, spiritual unity of the whole, which of itself might outweigh the outer, the material unity of action, of place, and of time. At all events it must have become evident that the representation of a full, complete, and diversified life of a great energetic character, is an infinitely higher and nobler work of art than, as it were, to stretch out a single deed on the rack of five acts in a succession of fine speeches, in order, after wearisome preparations, deliberations, and sentimental effusions, to have it, in the last act, accomplished by characters out of whom correctness had sucked all life and blood.

This knowledge was further supported by the general course of literary history. The French drama and the Italian opera—which was formed on the same principles—could satisfy only so-called connoisseurs who looked at them with the eyes of their theories, or the more highly cultured minds *par excellence*, whose sight was blinded by fashion. The people remained attached to the *petites pièces*, that is, to farces and to dramatic and musical 'entertainments.' However, this food contained as little nutriment as the French tragedy or the Italian opera: feeling and imagination were sent away empty, or at least felt the desire for more sustaining nourishment. No wonder that Sam. Richardson's 'Pamela' (1740) was seized upon as in the very fever of hunger, and that his 'Clarissa' (1748) founded a new epoch in the domain of romance writing. The wide and enthusiastic reception met with by these romances was an unconscious reaction and protestation against the French taste, which up to that time had prevailed in this department of literature also; and this imitation of the French romances, with their long-winded descriptions of the love affairs of princes, had

encouraged the same unnaturalness, bombast, and mannerism which characterises the French drama. Richardson's diffuse moralising descriptions are distinguished only by simplicity and the naturalness of the subject and form, by sincerity of feeling, and by fine, faithful, and lifelike delineation of character. It was this that had eagerly been desired; and however much Richardson may in every other point differ from Shakspeare, in this respect he turned back, if not to Shakspeare himself, at all events to Shakspeare's principles in the art of poetry. After the path had once been opened, other and more gifted minds followed in the same direction: Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, Goldsmith, and others, soon even eclipsed Richardson, and made the novel a favourite style of reading with the whole nation, in fact, the predominant species of poetry.

The novel could not but speedily exercise an influence upon the drama. For novels, although they may not have directly produced the so-called domestic, sentimental and moralising plays—which, as already said, appeared about the second half of the eighteenth century—were nevertheless the means of establishing them on the stage. And yet it was they which were again the means of removing, or at least modifying, this style of play, and of giving a new turn to the poetical taste. In the year 1765 Bishop *Percy* published his '*Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*,' a collection (subsequently much enlarged) of old English and Scottish songs, ballads and romances, more especially of such as treated of the same subjects as Shakspeare's plays, or were incidentally mentioned, quoted or interwoven in them. They gave the romantic element of Shakspeare's works in a different form, and in this more popular shape again brought them closer to the spirit of the age. For although—as has been recently proved—the good bishop has in many instances altered these reliques of a poetical past, by so-called corrections, and not only formally modernized them, but also not unfrequently weakened and diluted their substance, still they met with a good reception, and doubtless exercised an important influence upon the further development of poetical literature. Their influence alone, however, would not have sufficed to introduce that change in

the taste of the age which commenced towards the end of the century; I allude to the fondness for *romance*, the *romantic* taste and style of poetry which since that time has gradually gained ascendancy—a change with which we may date a new epoch in the history of Shakspeare's plays; for the novel came to their assistance and completed what they had begun. The first chords of this new style of poetry were struck by Mrs. *Anna Radcliffe*: her novels (apart from a few lyric poems) being, as far as I know, the first larger productions of modern romantic poetry in England. Her first novel, 'The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne' (1789), strikes the chord but gently, and yet it marks the tone which, in her two following works, 'A Sicilian Romance' (1790) and 'The Romance of the Forest' (1791), is expressed in the most decided manner. The spirit of the mysterious, the marvellous, and the awful which pervades her writings, formed almost as great a contrast to Richardson's, Fielding's, and Goldsmith's poetical pictures of every-day life, as the latter did to the artificial unnaturalness of the French style. Mrs. Radcliffe not only found admirers, but soon also imitators, and even Sir Walter Scott's famous novels, although separated from hers by several decades, nevertheless in many respects show the same affinity of spirit which proceeds from the same general tendency of taste.

It was about this time that German poetry—which had meanwhile entered its palmiest days—began to exercise its influence upon the English taste, and powerfully supported the new romantic tendency. For, in a wider sense, and in contrast to the French classic style, Goethe and Schiller, and more especially the whole *Sturm und Drang* period of German literature may be termed romantic. As early as 1786 Reynold published his 'Werter,' a tragedy which, indeed, as was to be expected, did not meet with any success on the stage, because, in following Goethe's narrative rather closely, it was almost wholly wanting in action; yet it shows what a deep impression Goethe's immortal poem had made. In 1790 the end of Goethe's 'Clavigo' was published in *The Spectator*; 1792 saw a translation of Schiller's *Räuber*; this was followed by a

translation of Goethe's *Iphigenia* in 1793; of Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* in 1794; of Schiller's *Don Carlos* and his *Kabale und Liebe* in 1795; of his *Fiesco* in 1796, and of Goethe's *Stella* and his *Clavigo* in 1798. Walter Scott, who as early as 1796 had published successful translations of some of Bürger's ballads, in 1799 translated Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen*, and in 1800-1801 B. Thomson published under the title of 'The German Theatre,' a whole collection of German dramas, in which appeared, together with some of Kotzebue's better plays, Babo's *Otto von Wittelsbach*, Reitzenstein's *Graf Königsmark*, Schiller's *Räuber* and *Don Carlos*, Goethe's *Stella*, and Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*; these translations were better than the previous ones, and were played before English audiences.

It is self-evident that this change of taste was also brought about by the great historical events of the eighteenth century, the War of Independence of the North-American States, and by the French Revolution with its far-reaching consequences; Rousseau and his disciples also contributed to it. These remoter causes, however, do not belong to our present sketch. More closely related to our discussion is the influence which the great actor J. P. Kemble exercised upon the æsthetic culture of the English public. In 1788 he stood at the head of Drury Lane Theatre, and since then had unweariedly endeavoured to re-introduce and re-establish upon the stage the earlier masterpieces of the English drama—Beaumont's, Fletcher's, Massinger's and others—but more particularly most of Shakspeare's plays, many of which had for long lain unnoticed. In this attempt he remodelled some scenes to adapt them to the taste of the age, and this was generally well done. However, the new period in the history of the English drama first began with the results of the mighty influence which German literature exercised, not only upon the English taste but upon the development of the new and better spirit of English *poetry* itself, the first stirrings of which were felt at the beginning of the present century. With the rich fruits of this revival, the genius of the German nation repaid the British people for what, since the days of Lessing, it had received from their greatest poet. The most highly-gifted poets of the more recent age were

Walter Scott, Th. Moore, Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Lamb and others, all of whose minds were more or less formed under German influence. Coleridge, Southey, Ch. Lamb, Carlyle and others, possessed the additional merit of having made larger circles of their countrymen acquainted with German literature. Of Goethe's 'Faust' there appeared within the first ten years after it was published, from twelve to fifteen different translations, and Schiller gradually became a favourite poet with the educated portion of the nation. It was through the works of these masters—nearest akin to Shakspeare's own—that Englishmen were enabled to form a new estimate of their own great poet whose immortal genius they seemed to meet with again, in a different form, in the works of the German poets. The English now began to look at Shakspeare with different eyes, they tried to understand him from within himself, from the period in which he lived, and from the historical conditions of his writings; they threw aside their old æsthetic theories, and asked themselves whether there did not exist other and equally justified forms and laws in dramatic art, than those upon which the ancient drama was formed, and the misapplied use of which had created the French classic style. Shakspeare now, for the first time, also received from the judgment of *æsthetic criticism*, the full, unreserved recognition which he had always possessed in the hearts of the people.

This revolution in the change of taste was no doubt considerably influenced by *August Wilhelm Schlegel's* 'Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature,'* as indeed is expressly admitted by Englishmen themselves (among others by Ch. Knight). These lectures, it is true, were not translated into English till 1815, but *Sam. Taylor Coleridge*, if not stimulated by them, at all events his excellent lectures on Shakspeare (delivered at the Surrey Institution in 1814) are quite in accordance with Schlegel's spirit. Coleridge's lectures were not printed till 1836, and then appeared under the title of 'Coleridge's Literary Remains;' in fact, the first complete form was not published till 1849, when the

* *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*. Heidelberg, 1809. Translated by Dr. Black.

title of the book was changed to 'Notes and Lectures upon Shakspeare, by Coleridge;' however, the powerful impression made by them upon his large audiences was such, that Ch. Knight thinks that his essays may be regarded 'as forming a new era for the critical opinion upon Shakspeare, as propounded by Englishmen.'

The new spirit then gave rise also to a new and eager study of the history of Shakspeare and his age. Francis Douce's already-mentioned 'Illustrations of Shakspeare' was followed by *Nathaniel Drake's* great and laborious work, 'Shakspeare and his Times, including the Biography of the Poet, etc.' (2 vols. 4to., 1817), which bears witness to the greatest industry, and was subsequently completed by his 'Memorials of Shakspeare' (1828). His works were succeeded by *Nares's* 'Glossary, or a Collection of words, phrases, names, and allusions to customs, proverbs, etc., which have been thought to require illustration in the works of English authors, particularly Shakspeare and his contemporaries' (1822) which was republished and augmented by Halliwell and Wright in 1859; this is the work upon which *Mrs. Cowden Clarke* founded her excellent 'Concordance to Shakspeare' (1844, 2nd ed. 1848). *A. Scottowe*, in his 'Life of Shakspeare, Inquiries into the Originality of his Dramatic plots and characters, and Essays on the Ancient Theatres' (2 vols. 1824), sifted and arranged the materials concerning Shakspeare's life and the origin of his dramas. Innumerable monographs and articles, contributed to the various periodicals, discussed Shakspeare's style, his mind and character from the most different points of view; among these I shall only mention: *Ch. Lamb's* 'Essay on the Tragedies of Shakspeare,' etc., 1809; *Th. Price's* 'Wisdom and Genius of Shakspeare,' etc. (1838, 2nd. ed. 1853); *W. Birch's* 'Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakspeare' (1848); *J. A. Halpin's* 'The Dramatic Unities of Shakspeare' (1849). *W. Hazlitt*, with penetration and poetical understanding renewed the attempt to collect a complete set of pictures from the scattered features of the dramatic characters in Shakspeare. His 'Characters of Shakspeare's Plays' (1817), and *Mrs. Jameson's* 'Shakspeare's Female Characters' (1833, 2nd. ed. 1842), are the finest

blossoms on that branch of Shakspearian literature which was first cultivated by W. Richardson. The already-mentioned editions of Shakspeare's works by Reed, Boswell, and A. Chalmers, to which may be added Boydell's edition with engravings (9 vols. fol. 1802), M. Wood's and Ballantyne's editions (the former in 1806, in 14 vols., the latter in 1807, in 12 vols.); the editions of Harvey (1825), of Singer (1826), of Valpy (1832-34), and of Campbell (1838)—all these bear evidence of the uninterrupted advance of Shakspeare literature, and of the ever increasing interest taken in it by the English public.

The literary historical investigations extended at the same time to all those objects which were connected with Shakspeare's life and works. There appeared successively special editions of the extant plays of the most important of Shakspeare's predecessors, contemporaries and successors who have been discussed in our first volume. These were followed by the publications of the Shakespeare Society (in 1841 ff.), which, in more than fifty vols., have likewise reprinted not only a number of the earlier dramas, but also other works which were important as regards dramatic art, of which, however, there existed but few copies. *J. P. Collier's* 'History of English Dramatic Poetry to the time of Shakespeare, and Annals of the Stage,' etc. (1831)—which bears evidence of the greatest industry—completed Malone's account of the history of the stage in the days of Shakspeare, whereas his 'Extracts from the Registers of the Stationers' Company' (1848), and the 'Diary of Philip Henslowe,' which he published in 1845, contributed as much to the accurate determination of the dates in which Shakspeare's works and those of his contemporaries appeared on the stage, as did his 'Shakspeare's Library' (1840), towards extending our knowledge of the authorities from whom Shakspeare drew the materials for his dramatic compositions. *J. O. Halliwell*, in his 'Life of W. Shakespeare, including many Particulars respecting the Poet and his Family never before printed' (1848), gives a most careful reprint of all the documents upon which our knowledge concerning Shakspeare's life and family circumstances is founded; his 'Dictionary of Old English Plays existing either in Print or Manuscript from the earliest times to the close of the

seventeenth century' (1860), and his 'Hand-list of Books, Manuscripts, etc., illustrative of the Life and Writings of Shakespeare' (1859), gives a complete bibliographical list of all the works of any importance as regards the history of Shakspeare and his writings. In *Charles Knight's* 'Studies on Shakspeare,' etc. (1849), we find not only his own careful examinations concerning the æsthetic value of Shakspeare's plays—in which, with an unprejudiced mind he gives a selection of the results of German æsthetic criticism on Shakspeare—but an historical sketch which lays before the reader the changes undergone and the progress made by æsthetic criticism on Shakspeare in England. *W. S. Walker*, in his work 'Shakspeare's Versification and its apparent Irregularities' (1854), has treated of quite a special subject, it is true, but one which is important both to the criticism of the text as well as the knowledge of the peculiarities of Shakspeare's style and their gradual development.

All these works appear to have been suggested by profound love and veneration for the great master, but are also imbued with a spirit of strictly philosophical research, of calm enquiry and careful consideration, which is as much removed from one-sided partiality for ancient classicism as from mediæval romanticism; their sole object being to understand Shakspeare from within himself, to judge him from the rules of art which he himself followed, and to submit these to an unprejudiced critical estimate. For the first time criticism now rose to that height which it should have occupied from the very commencement; for the first time we have the union of the two elements which had until then been kept apart, but which for criticism in general, and in particular for the critical treatment of the text of a poem, are equally indispensable;—these elements are the correct principles of *æsthetic* and the true laws of *philological* criticism. It was now only that, with the acquired insight, *true* and *æsthetico-philological* criticism could establish the fact of how and why Shakspeare's works—in regard to their æsthetic value—are masterpieces in dramatic art, and apply this fact to the treatment of the text of his writings.

What I wish to say is that this insight at the same time gave a new and higher standpoint, and imposed a

new and higher task upon all those who might undertake to re-edit Shakspeare's works. And during this last period there have appeared almost annually editions, which in one or other respect may be called new; of these, however, I can mention but the comparatively small portion which occupy the above standpoint, and which accordingly aim at solving the given task. For although all the editors endeavoured—with a zeal which deserves acknowledgment—to attain the same object, still not only were their capacities far from equal, but the very paths they followed were very different.* The latest edition, the so-called Cambridge Edition—'The Works of W. Shakspeare,' edited by *W. G. Clark, J. Glover, and W. A. Wright* (9 vo's. 1863-66)—in general again adopts the principle of the variorum editions in regard to the treatment of the text, and carries it out with such great care and circumspection that we can implicitly rely upon the accuracy and completeness of the list of the different readings, emendations, and conjectures given below the text; but the principle is followed with greater tact and a clearer judgment, so that the edition may be considered the best of that species which is so useful and indispensable for deeper study. As regards the completeness and trustworthiness of the critical apparatus, it is perhaps the best of *all* the English editions.—*S. W. Singer*, whose edition I have already mentioned, also took up an older principle, inasmuch as he very freely, often arbitrarily, emends and corrects the text wherever it does not correspond with the idea required by his opinion;—*Ch. Knight*, in the editions which he prepared—among which his Pictorial Edition (London 1839-41) which is adorned with numerous well-selected illustrations, was especially successful—took up an entirely opposite standpoint. He adhered with such strictness to the text of the old original editions, more particularly to that of the first folio, that, wherever it was possible he tried to save and defend its numerous misprints, displacements and mutilations of the text. This one-sided and impracticable principle in

* In regard to these editions I refer to the excellent article by *F. Leo* (*Jahrbruch der D. Shakspeare Gesellschaft*, i. 196 ff.), with which, in all essential points, my opinion coincides.

philosophical criticism is, however, accompanied by so sound and generally reliable a judgment in regard to the æsthetic value of Shakspeare's plays, and by so ingenious and deep an understanding of them, that his edition in this respect richly makes up for what we miss as regards the correctness of the text.

J. P. Collier must be mentioned directly by the side of *Ch. Knight*, not only in point of time, but also as regards his criticisms. He too in his (first) edition: 'The Works of W. Shakspeare. The Text formed from an entirely new Collation of the old Editions; with the Various Readings, Notes, a Life of the Poet,' etc. (8 vols. 1842 f.), followed the original traditional text as closely as possible. He, however, has not done this as exclusively as *Knight*, and has shown a more correct judgment as regards the different value of the old quartos and folios. When we consider his great learning, the industry and the care with which he worked, it is to be regretted that *Collier* as a critic, was obviously wanting in fine feeling for style and poetical appreciation. This want showed itself not only in his adopting readings from the old quartos which were as untenable as those which *Knight* had endeavoured to retain from the folio of 1623,* but also manifested itself in the most striking manner in the fact that *Collier*, in his second edition (published in 1853 both in 8 vols. and in 1 vol.), suddenly went over to the directly opposite standpoint. In this second edition he adopts all the corrections — some appropriate, some wholly untenable and arbitrary—which he had found in a copy of the folio of 1623 that had accidentally come into his possession, and which he considered or gave out to be corrections made towards the middle of the seventeenth century, as he thinks, by a person acquainted with the old theatrical practices, and perhaps drew his information from Shakspeare's original manuscripts. He has thus irremediably injured his reputation as a text-critic.† *J. O. Halliwell's* edition

* As *Dyce* has irrefutably proved in his *Remarks on Mr. J. P. Collier's and Mr. C. Knight's Editions of Shakspeare*, 1844.

† A full discussion as to the value of these supposed old emendations of the text will be found in *R. Grant White's Shakspeare's Scholar*, p. 33 ff.

(4 vols. 1851), and more particularly his splendid edition in 15 vols. folio (1853), is likewise less distinguished for the excellence of his criticisms of the text, than for the great amount of historical and literary references, and the great correctness of the print of the text itself, as well as of all the documents which in any way affect the life and works of the poet.

Four years later appeared *Alexander Dyce's* first edition entitled, 'The Works of W. Shakespear. The Text Revised,' etc. (8 vols. 1857). He, in direct opposition to Collier, almost without exception rejected the emendations of the supposed old corrector, and adhered, with great strictness, but moderated by a finer critical tact, to the principle not to alter anything in the text of the old original editions, unless under pressing necessity, and accordingly, only in exceptional cases to admit emendations and conjectures. Even this first edition of Dyce's is perhaps, as regards text-criticism, the best of those which had hitherto appeared, in spite of the paralysing, one-sidedness of the principle he followed. Of even greater value, as I think, is his second edition (8 vols. 1861). Dyce, in his preface, expressly declares himself to have become convinced of the incorrectness, of the over-cautiousness, of the principle which he had favoured in his first edition, and then adds: 'If the most eminent classical scholars in editing the dramas of antiquity have not scrupled frequently to employ conjecture for the restoration of the text, I cannot understand why an editor of Shakspeare . . . should hesitate to adopt the happiest of the emendations proposed from time to time during more than a century and a half, by men of great sagacity and learning, always assuming that the deviations from the early editions are duly recorded.' This, I think, is the only right principle wherever, in fact, text-criticism is required, that is, wherever, as in Shakspeare's works the text has unquestionably been disfigured by all sorts of errors in orthography or printing. And, indeed, in the case of Shakspeare a comparatively greater freedom may be granted, in so far as we know with certainty that he himself had no hand either in the publication or in the printing of his writings, and as, therefore, it is extremely

probable that even the manuscripts from which they were printed, may have experienced more or less unauthorized alterations. The difficulty—which moreover increases with the degree of the artistic value of the poem—is, to be perfectly sure of ascertaining what passages require emendation, and then carefully to change them in accordance with the author's style, his mind, and character. For this purpose—and especially in the case of a poet of Shakspeare's importance—it is not only necessary, as F. A. Leo rightly observes, to possess classic culture, acuteness of judgment, a diversity of knowledge and consequently respect for the poet's sources and authorities, but also a refined æsthetic judgment, the power of, as it were, living into the creations of the poet, and likewise sufficient poetic talent to find out the corresponding expression for what had thus been called into life. Dyce possesses these requirements in a high degree, and what he perhaps wants in poetic talent and a sure feeling for style and beauty, is amply compensated for by his fine critical tact, and by his sound knowledge of the language and the literature, the life, the manners and customs, etc., of the Shakspearian age, and more particularly of Shakspeare's style of language, as is proved by his extremely valuable 'Glossary to Shakspeare,' which forms the ninth volume of his second edition of the poet's works. His edition, accordingly, may be regarded as the best of all the English collective editions.

The one which approaches nearest to it, which is worked out in the same spirit, and appeared almost contemporaneously, is that of *Richard Grant White*: 'The Plays of W. Shakspeare. Edited from the Folio of 1623, with Various Readings from all the Editions,' etc. (12 vols., Boston, 1862). This eminent American Shakspeare-student has here endeavoured to turn to account all the treasures contained in his 'Shakspeare's Scholar.' Worthily by the side of these stands the excellent edition of our eminent German scholar, *Nicholas Delius*; * the text is in English, with German notes, explanations, and introductions.

* *Shakspeare's Werke. Herausgegeben u. erklärt, etc.* (7 vols. Elberfeld, 1854; 2nd ed. 1864).

BOOK IX.

HISTORY OF SHAKSPEARE'S PLAYS IN GERMANY.



CHAPTER I.

FROM THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY TO THE DAYS OF LESSING.

THE points in which German enquiry and German criticism affected the history of Shakspeare's works in England have already been intimated. I shall add to these intimations a short sketch of the relations, the circumstances and events under the influence of which Shakspeare not only became known in Germany, but gradually became established and nationalised there, in fact, a German poet of the most far-famed reputation, of the most universal recognition.*

About the time when Shakspeare was becoming celebrated in London, that is, towards the year 1589, the fame of the excellence of the English stage had extended as far as Germany; this was more especially owing to the travels of men from the higher ranks of German society, for instance, Count Frederick of Mömpelgardt (afterwards Duke of Wirtemberg), who was in England in 1589; also

* In this sketch I have referred principally to the following works: A. Koberstein, *Vermischte Aufsätze zur Literaturgeschichte und Aesthetik* (Leipzig, 1858); W. Fürstenau, *Zur Geschichte der Musik und des Theaters* (Dresden, 1861); K. Elze, *Die Englische Sprache und Literatur in Deutschland* (Dresden, 1864); R. Köhler, *Kunst über alle Künste ein böß Weib gut zu machen* (a German adaptation of Shakspeare's *Taming of the Shrew*), Leipzig, 1864; A. Cohn, *Shakspeare in Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth century* (London, 1865).

of Prince Louis of Anhalt, who resided in London in 1593; of Paul Hentzner, a companion of a Baron von Rehdinger, who was there at the beginning of the seventeenth century; and of Prince Otto of Hesse, who was likewise in London in 1611. However, it is the latter only who mentions that, among the entertainments provided for him at King James' Court, he saw two of Shakspeare's plays, 'The Tempest' and 'The Winter's Tale.' The enthusiastic praise bestowed upon these by Prince Otto, probably awakened in his countrymen the desire to become personally acquainted with the famous plays; and the actors also, partly for the sake of gain and partly from the old fondness of Englishmen for travelling, may have been glad to comply with the pressing invitations they received. It may, however, have been that the actors—being conscious of their skill—accidentally, and without any special request, tried their fortune on the continent; we know, at all events, that as early as 1585 the Earl of Leicester's players accompanied him on his journey to Holland. Whatever may have been the inducement that led them to undertake such journeys, this much is certain, that as early as 1603 English musicians and actors appeared before the Court at Stuttgart. And about the same time we hear of English "instrumentalists" at the Courts of Saxony and Brandenburg; these, however, as Cohn points out, were probably actors as well. At a later date (between 1615–1625) there came to Germany by way of Holland and Friesland, another, and, as it seems, a larger and more complete company of players provided with a French passport, which gives the names of the four principal members, and states that the object of their journey was to give performances in music, as well as all kinds of plays, *comédies, tragédies, histoires*. There can be no doubt that these English companies met with success, and that the acquaintance with the English drama even at that early date influenced the formation of the German theatre. This is proved not only from a humorous poem written by a Frankfurt versifier (quoted by Cohn), but also from the circumstance that the English companies in the course of time made longer sojourns, and, supported by German coadjutors, gradually made tours through the

whole country (the Rhine provinces, Brunswick, Hesse, Brandenburg, Saxony, East and West Prussia, Austria and Steiermark).

These facts explain the relationship which manifestly existed between the English and the German drama at the end of the sixteenth century. Among the plays written by Duke Julius of Brunswick, which appeared in 1594, there are two which show unmistakable resemblance to Shakspeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing,' and 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' but doubtless only because both poets drew their subjects from the same sources, and because the Duke wrote in the English style. For, as we have seen, it is next to impossible that 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' and 'Much Ado About Nothing,' could have been on the boards before 1594. More doubtful is the case of Jacob Ayrer, who died about 1618; he may have had Shakspeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing' before him while writing his *Geschichte der schönen Phönicia* and his *Tragödie von Juliet und Hippolyta*. I think, however, that even in these plays the resemblance arises from the sameness of the subjects which were taken from Italian novels; this is evidently the explanation of the case of Ayrer's comedy *Von der schönen Sidea*, the similarity between it and Shakspeare's 'Tempest,' being confined only to the general features of the story of Prospero. On the other hand, however, there can be no doubt that Andreas Gryphius (1616-64) in his *Absurda Comica* or *Herr Peter Squenz* not only had before him the scenes from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' where the artisans appear, but that he copied them.* It was probably through companies of itinerant English players that Gryphius directly or indirectly, wholly or in part, became acquainted with Shakspeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.' For it is now an established fact† that, in 1611—at the Court of the Administrator of the Bishopric of Magdeburg, at Halle—English actors played the 'Merchant of Venice,' and that, among the twenty-five different English pieces played in Dresden in 1626, they gave performances

* As is proved by Halliwell in his *Introduction to Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1841.

† Through Cohn's investigations.

of 'Hamlet,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'King Lear,' and 'Julius Cæsar' (?). It is also extremely probable that the unknown authors of the *Sehr lamentablen Geschichte von Tito Andronico* and of the *Unschuldig beschuldigt Innocentia*,* made use of Shakspeare's 'Titus Andronicus' and his 'Cymbeline.' It is also obvious that *Der bestrafte Brudermord, oder Prinz Hamlet*, is merely a free adaptation of Shakspeare's 'Hamlet;' it is indeed not printed in the *Olla Podrida* till 1779, but, according to Cohn, was brought upon the stage by Veltheim's company in 1665. It is equally obvious that the *Kunst über alle Künste ein böses Weib gut zu machen*† (belonging to the year 1672) is founded upon Shakspeare's 'Taming of the Shrew.' A third example of this kind of 'introduction' which Shakspeare experienced in Germany is a version of 'Romeo and Juliet,' of which A. Cohn gives a careful reprint.

It can, in fact, scarcely be said that the German public became acquainted with Shakspeare through this species of imitation. The above-mentioned plays, and more especially the two tragedies are stripped of all the poetical fragrance which belongs to the subject in Shakspeare; the representation is intolerably diffuse; the many moralising remarks interwoven, deaden the interest in the dramatic personages as well as in the action itself; the delineation of the characters is insipid and vague; the diction almost invariably prosaic in the extreme, and the expression and versification already give evidence of French influence;—in short the adaptations stand much in the same relation to their originals as a caricature to a portrait.

No wonder, therefore, that Shakspeare's name—which moreover, was not even mentioned by those who had made use of his plays—was almost unknown in Germany during the seventeenth century. Morhof, it is true, mentions Shakspeare in his 'Instructions in the German Language,'‡ but confesses never to have seen anything of

* The first is printed in a work entitled *Englische Komödien und Tragödien*, published in 1630; the latter in an edition of the same collection published in 1670.

† See Köhler's work referred to above.

‡ *Unterricht von der Deutschen Sprache*, first edition, 1682.

his or of Beaumont and Fletcher's, but, on the other hand, was acquainted with Ben Jonson's works. Bentham also, in his 'State of the English Schools and Church,' ‡ which appeared a few years later, speaks of Shakspeare as one of England's 'scholars,' but has nothing more to say of him than that he was born at Stratford in Warwickshire, that his learning was very bad, and that it was, therefore, all the more astonishing to find him an excellent poet; that he possessed great talent, was full of humour and so successful in tragedy as well as in comedy that, 'he could have moved an Heraclitus to laughter and a Democritus to tears.' However, Berthold Feind (1678-1723), a native of Hamburg—who, in consequence of his travels had acquired a more refined culture than was usually met with in those days—seems really to have been acquainted with 'the famous English *tragicus*,' and has many a thing to say in his favour; but probably it was only when travelling in England that Feind became acquainted with Shakspeare's works.

Matters remained in this state till towards the middle of the eighteenth century. Even Bodmer—who, in two of his critical treatises (1740-41) mentions the author of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'—speaks of him in the one by the name of 'Saspar,' and in the second as 'Sasper.' And although this corruption of the name may not—as K. Elze † endeavours to prove—be the result of ignorance, but of an unsuccessful attempt to put the name into a German form, still the substance of the two treatises shows pretty clearly that Bodmer knew Shakspeare only as the author of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.' Jöcher, also, seems not to have known much more about Shakspeare than what had been said of him by Morhof and Bentham. In an article in his 'Dictionary of Learned Men,' ‡ he says of Shakspeare only that he had been badly educated, that he knew but little Latin, and yet was very successful in poetry, and then adds, 'he had a playful mind, but could also be very serious, excelled in tragedy, and had many ingenious and subtle controversies with

* *Englischer Schul- und Kirchen-Staat.*

† *Jahrbuch d. Deutschen Shakesp. Gesellschaft*, i. 338.

‡ *Gelehrten-lexicon* (1750 f.).

Ben Jonson, in which neither of them were any great gainers.' Meanwhile in 1741 appeared the first German translation of one of Shakspeare's plays. This was Caspar Wilhelm von Bork's 'Attempt'* to give a versified translation of Shakspeare's 'Julius Cæsar'; the translator was a distinguished Prussian minister of state, and a member of the Berlin Academy, in honour of whom Frederick the Great himself wrote an *éloge* in the *Mémoires de l'Académie de Berlin* (1747-49). This attempt seems, however, to have owed its origin to an accidental freak on the part of the translator. It is written throughout in the most unwieldy of rhymed Alexandrines, into which even Shakspeare's light-footed prose is screwed; it furnishes a striking proof of the want of taste in the German mode of expression at the time, even among cultivated minds and men of high standing. To give but one example, the speech of Cassius (i. 3),

'But if you would consider the true cause,
Why all these fires, why all these gliding ghosts,' etc.

is translated by C. W. von Bork thus:

'Doch schauet nur den Grund der wahren Ursach ein,
Warum die Wunder jetzt, warum die Feuer seyn,
Warum Gespenster ziehn und abgestorbne Geister,
Warum nach jeder Art die Vögel und die Beister,
Warum betagte Leut', und warum Narr und Kind
Und alle diese Ding' anjetzt verkehret sind,' etc.

This unsuccessful attempt does not appear to have been received with much approbation. At all events no new attempt to translate Shakspeare was made till seventeen years afterwards; that is about the time when Lessing† declared that he would rather have written 'The Merchant of Venice,' which was almost wholly unknown, than the 'Dying Cato,' which all the world was admiring. This next translation was one of 'Romeo and Juliet' published anonymously in a work entitled 'Specimens of the English Stage.'‡ However this translation was equally and deservedly unsuccessful.

* *Versuch einer gebundenen Uebersetzung des Trauerspiels von dem Tode des Julius Cæsar. Aus dem Englischen des Shakspear.* Berlin, 1741.

† In his *Theatralische Bibliothek*.

‡ *Neue Probestücke der Englischen Schaubühne.* 3 vols., Basle, 1758.

Lessing was the first German to open up to his countrymen the understanding of the great poet whose mind was so closely related to his own. He had, as already said, now and again pointed to Shakspeare with his powerful hand in the 'Theatralische Bibliothek' (1754-58). But it was in his 'Letters on Literature'† (1759) that he first began his long-meditated attack upon the French theatre, its supposed classic character, and the German apeing of it. As in England so in Germany it had gradually come to be the general opinion—owing to French influence, and through writers like Martin Opitz and his school—that the ancient drama, and especially ancient tragedy, was the absolute model for dramatic poetry. It was upon this foundation that Gottshed had erected his critical throne, and upon it that he supported his undertaking, to raise the German theatre up to the level of art, by a slavish observance of the supposed Aristotelian rules, and by a slavish imitation of the supposed masterpieces of the French school. This principle had been unsuccessfully combated by Breitingger and Bodmer, but Lessing hurled Gottshed from his laboriously built-up throne at one thrust, by maintaining and proving that it would have been better if the Professor had never meddled with the theatre, as his supposed improvements were either dispensable trifles or actual deteriorations, and that the creation of an entirely new theatre after the French pattern—for which he felt his small powers equal—was wholly unsuited to the German mode of thinking. Further that Gottshed might have found abundant proof in the old German plays—which he rejected—that the German taste sympathised more with that of the English than with the French; that, in a tragedy, our wish is to have more to see and to think about than what the timid tragedies of the French give us to see and to think about; that the grand, the terrible, and the melancholy has more effect upon us than the pretty, the tender, and the amorous, and that too great a simplicity is more wearisome than great complication. Again, that it would have been far wiser to have given Germany translations of Shakspeare's masterpieces with a few modest alterations, than to intro-

Literatur-Briefe, 1759.

duce Corneille and Racine. That the people would have had more taste for them, and that Shakspeare would have awakened a very different genius to that excited by these French tragic writers, inasmuch as genius can be kindled only by genius, and most readily by one who seemed to owe all to nature, and was not intimidated by the laborious perfections of art. That even when compared with the ancients, Shakspeare was infinitely superior and more tragic than Corneille, although the latter was intimately acquainted with the ancient writers, and Shakspeare knew next to nothing about them. That it was not in mere mechanical arrangement (like Corneille) that Shakspeare more closely resembled them, but in all *essential* points. For, that he almost invariably attained the object of tragedy—however strange and peculiar might be the paths he selected—whereas the French writers almost as invariably failed to do so, although they followed the path paved by the ancients, etc.

The last proposition Lessing discussed more fully in his 'Hamburgische Dramaturgie' (1767-68). His object there was to show more especially what a gulf separated the French from the ancient drama, and how in all essential points it differed widely from the rules of Aristotle, whereas Shakspeare's works could generally be made to harmonise with them very well. The last portion of his 'Dramaturgie' closes with the words: 'I should be vain enough to fancy that I had done something for our stage, could I venture to believe that I had succeeded in finding the only means to check the influence of the present ferment in matters of taste. I can, however, take to myself the credit of having aimed at it, inasmuch as I have allowed nothing to be more pressing than to protest against the folly of the regularity of the French drama. No nation, in fact, has misunderstood the rules of the ancient drama more than the French. A few cursory observations which they found in Aristotle in regard to the appropriate arrangement of the drama they made essential principles, and so weakened what was essential by all kinds of limitations and quibblings, that their works were far from producing that highest effect for which the philosopher had devised his rules.'

The *essential*, in Lessing's opinion, is that which Aristotle says in regard to the peculiar object of tragedy; and then with his irresistible ingenuity, and his equally irresistible and drastic manner of representing things—in which every word is a fact—he explains the Aristotelian doctrine of pity and of fear, and of the purification of these passions, in which, according to Aristotle, the object of tragedy consists. Lessing's principal idea is that the pity, of which Aristotle speaks, is not mere philanthropy but an emotion, and so directly connected with fear that fear cannot exist with pity, and *vice versa*; and that the purification which Aristotle wished, does not apply to all passions without distinction, but again only to pity and fear and those *παθήματα* connected with or arising from these. He shows, more particularly, that Aristotle's opinion had hitherto been misunderstood by all, especially by Corneille, Dacier, and the French tragic writers, and that therefore their tragedies possessed everything except what they ought to possess,—in other words, that they were refined, very instructive plays, but not tragedies. 'The authors,' he goes on to say, 'could not but have been very clever men, and some of them deserve no small place among poets; but they are no tragic poets, Corneille and Racine, Crébillon and Voltaire have little or nothing of that which made Sophocles a Sophocles, Euripides an Euripides, and *Shakspeare* a Shakspeare. The latter rarely act in contradiction to the demands of Aristotle, but the former have done so all the more frequently.' In another passage Lessing rejects Wieland's defence of Shakspeare's mixture of tragedy and comedy, but only in order to defend it the more thoroughly. He maintains that nature does not altogether justify the mixture, as in that case every dramatic monster, without either plan, connection or sense, would be justifiable. That it is not *every* combination of solemn earnestness with farcical merriment which is warrantable; that we ought rather necessarily to feel it repulsive to see that in art which we would wish to be different in nature itself, and adds: 'It is only when the same event, in its progress, assumes all the various shades of interest, and when one event not merely follows upon another, but of necessity proceeds from

it, and again when seriousness directly produces laughter, and sadness joy, or conversely, that the abstraction of the one or the other seems to us impossible, it is then only that we do not desire a like abstraction in art; *and art can contrive even to draw advantages from this impossibility.*' Lessing here strikingly shows what alone is necessary to constitute the inner spiritual connection between Shakspearian humour and tragic pathos, the close blending of the tragic and the comic in the unity of the action and of the fundamental idea of the whole. Equally striking are his remarks upon the three so-called Aristotelian unities and their meaning. He says: 'The unity of the action was the chief dramatic law of the ancients; the unity of time and place were, so to say, but its natural consequences which they would perhaps not have observed more strictly than was necessarily demanded, but for the introduction of the chorus . . . The French, on the other hand, who had no pleasure in the true unity of the action, did not regard the unities of time and of place as consequences of the first unity, but as in themselves indispensable requisites for the representation of an action; these they thought themselves obliged to apply even to their fuller and more intricate plots with the same strictness that the use of the chorus could have demanded; although the chorus was entirely rejected by them.' They had thus tried to come to some arrangement with the tyrannical rules, and, accordingly, had fallen into all the absurdities which Lessing had shortly before lashed in the most amusing manner; yet the French tragic writers continued to make the greatest ado about their regularity, and looked down with contempt upon the English drama.

Accordingly, only *that* unity of time and of place is indispensable which is a *consequence* of the unity of the action, not that which is *external* and measurable by hours and yards. Again, if the unity of the action should require a *change* of the outward locality and of time, then this very change is as much a matter of necessity as the arbitrary stability of the French drama, or that demanded by the Chorus of the Greek drama. Further the unity of the action is not a single deed but the *progress* of the same event through all the different shades of

interest; in other words, the development of the action out of its fundamental *idea*, no matter of how many single deeds and events this development may consist.

Lessing thus endeavoured everywhere to determine the rules according to the nature and aim of art, not art according to rules. It was in this way that he censured the French writers and commended Shakspeare, not because of single beauties in his works, in the manner of the English critics of the time, but because of beauty itself, because of the agreement of Shakspeare's works with the true rules of art and with the true nature of art.

CHAPTER II.

WIELAND, HERDER, GOETHE, SCHILLER AND OTHERS IN
RELATION TO SHAKSPEARE.

WHILE Lessing, in taking the nearest way to introduce Shakspeare into Germany, entered upon the path of criticism and the purification of æsthetic taste, *Wieland* soon entered upon a second path which promised to lead to the same goal.

One year previous to the first appearance of Lessing's 'Hamburgische Dramaturgie,' *Wieland* had completed his translation of twenty-two of Shakspeare's plays.* This was an event in the history of German literature, the great importance of which again none knew better than Lessing. *Wieland*, it is true, still judged Shakspeare in the spirit of Pope, Johnson and other English critics of the age; his opinion was that Shakspeare, although possessing many beauties, had as many great defects, that 'in regard to expression he was not only coarse and incorrect,' but also in 'thousands of instances hard, stiff, bombastic, and frivolous.' Goethe† justly says of some of *Wieland*'s æsthetico-critical remarks on his own translation that 'if he (*Wieland*) were wise he would buy them up with his blood.' Moreover the translation itself is by no means perfect; apart from individual defects it does not, as a whole, show Shakspeare's genius in its true form, simply because it is written throughout in prose. Still Lessing is perfectly right in maintaining that its deficiencies should not have called forth the censure they did; for, he adds, 'the undertaking was very arduous; any one but *Wieland* would, in the hurry, have made more frequent blunders, and in ignorance, or for the sake of convenience, have skipped over more; what he has

* Published in 8 vols. Zurich, 1762-66.
In his *Helden, Götter und Wieland*.

done well it would be difficult for anyone else to do better.' This is so true that not only has Eschenburg done wisely to base his translation of Shakspeare's plays* upon Wieland's (correcting his faults as far as possible and filling up the gaps), but that even a master-mind like Schlegel has adopted single passages (for instance the scenes of the mechanics in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream') because he did not think he could do them better himself.

Wieland's translation, which, in fact, satisfied all reasonable demands because it was, at least, imbued throughout with an appreciation and feeling for genuine poetry, was the means of paving the way for the introduction of Shakspeare's plays upon the German stage. It was adaptations of Wieland's and Eschenburg's texts that *F. L. Schröder* (1744–1816) (one of the greatest masters of histrionic art on the German stage) made use of, after the eighth decade, in presenting Shakspeare to his countrymen. Upon first introducing the plays, Schröder made rather considerable alterations, but subsequently gave them in a more unadulterated form. Thus a third path was opened, and moreover the chief path, if the object in view was not only to introduce Shakspeare to cultured circles, but also to make the German people acquainted with him. Shakspeare's plays were not only acted in the Hamburg theatre (of which Schröder was the manager), but in all the places visited by the great actor on his tour in 1780, and they received a welcome that bordered upon enthusiasm. This produced, in ever wider circles, a poetical tone of mind which made it more easy for the first masterpieces of the German stage—which were appearing simultaneously—to find their way into the hearts of the people.

In the first instance, however, the acquaintance with Shakspeare produced, in æsthetic and literary circles—to use Lessing's expression—such 'a ferment' in matters of taste, that it threatened to destroy the good results that were expected from it. In spite of the grand flashes of light which the 'Hamburgische Dramaturgie' had cast into the dark atmosphere of German literature and

* *Sämmtliche Shakspeare'sche Schanspiele* (12 vols. 1775–77).

æsthetics, the greater part of the older art-critics still continued, in all essential points, to agree with Wieland's above-mentioned criticism of Shakspeare. In a review of Wieland's translation in 'The Library of the Fine Arts,'* it is said that the majority of readers will feel provoked with Shakspeare's faults without perceiving his beauties, and that only the few will feel themselves tempted to seek for the gold in the raw ore, and to remove the dross, etc.,—in short, that it would have been better had Shakspeare been left untranslated. The same opinion was expressed in a review† of Eschenburg's translation, where it is even maintained that, owing to the translation of Shakspeare's entire works and the performances of his plays, dramatic art, the principles of æsthetic taste, and the whole German stage had fallen back fully ten years. That the childish taste for mere spectacles, puppet-shows, processions, and other such fiddle-faddle would inevitably be re-introduced through him; and that excellence did not consist in producing strong effects. That such violent levers as Shakspeare makes use of (for instance, the scene between Lear and Edgar in the wood, the utter senselessness of which so confuses one, that one would wish one's ears stuffed with wadding) may perhaps have been acceptable to his audiences, to Englishmen, but that they need not on that account appear excellent to Germans, to 'people with well-balanced minds who know the difference between reason and imagination, and have arrived at a higher degree of moral development.' The reviewer goes on to say: 'What does a nation, whose taste moreover has taken a wrong course, want with a man like Shakspeare, who, notwithstanding his great genius, does not possess the smallest feeling for beauty, a writer full of excrescences, full of wild-fire, full of constrained witticisms, full of vulgar nonsense and low manners!' The reviewer would therefore gladly see the world rid of his works, and declares: 'Were I ruler of the realm I should forbid the representation of Shakspeare's plays; these savage dramas have an injurious influence upon the morality of the nation. . . Shakspeare's gladiatorial plays

* *Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften*, vol. ix.

† *Ibid.*, vol. xxiii.

invariably produce rudeness and savageness in the minds of the spectators and suppress all delicate emotions, they confuse the imagination and engender a taste for barbarous amusements. Let us leave them to the English, who are accustomed to be fed on cock-fights, boxing-matches, and duels—and much good may they get from their Roman taste!’

While such lamentations and abuse give us a reflection of the wrath of the admirers of the ancient drama in opposition to Lessing’s innovations, and his recommendation of Shakspeare, this latter influence was itself threatening to lead to so senseless an extreme in the very quarter where it had met with enthusiastic approbation, that it necessarily frustrated its own purpose. Lessing describes this effect produced by the closer acquaintance with Shakspeare in the last part of his ‘Hamburgische Dramaturgie’; he there says, ‘The assumption of our poets, that to imitate the French is much the same thing as working in accordance with the rules of the ancients, could not hold its own against the right state of feeling. This was fortunately aroused out of its slumber by some English plays, and we finally made the experience that tragedy was capable of an entirely different effect from that which Corneille and Racine had produced. But, blinded by this sudden flash of truth, we started back to the verge of another precipice. The English plays were obviously wanting in certain rules with which the French had made us but too well acquainted. What was the inference? It was this—that the aim of tragedy could be attained without these rules, nay, that these very rules might perhaps be to blame, were the aim less successfully attained. This might have been allowed to pass! But *these* rules began to be confounded with *all* rules, and, in fact, it was declared mere pedantry to prescribe what a genius should do and what he should leave undone. In short, we were upon the point of wilfully letting slip all our experience of bygone days, and of being inclined to expect poets to re-discover poetic art.’

In fact, while ‘the well-balanced minds’ of the contributors to the *Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften*, with their ‘high degree of moral culture,’ were using all their

weapons to defend the regularity of the well-tempered drama of the French, *Gerstenberg*, in his 'Essay on Shakspeare' * (1766), declared Aristotle's treatise on poetry to be a work rather superficially conceived or, at least, constructed upon very precarious premises, which had not taken the dramatic laws it contained from 'the nature of human reason,' but from the Greek 'experience of the stage' as sanctioned by their ancestors and the priesthood. *Gerstenberg* further commends Shakspeare's plays as 'living pictures of moral nature by the inimitable hand of a *Rafael*,' although they do not 'form a complete whole.' And while even *Weisse* turned Shakspeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' into a 'correct' conversational play in the French style, and *von Ayrenhoff* endeavoured, both by writing and criticising, to preserve the French taste and to suppress Shakspeare and all Shakspearians, *Gerstenburg*, *Leisewitz*, *Lenz*, *Klinger*, *Müller* (the painter), *Hahn* and others presented the world with dramas which not only bid defiance to all rules but even to all art. Shakspeare, in fact, like a new and fiery wine, had intoxicated the younger aspiring minds. In their zeal to free themselves from all fetters, in their eagerness to attain independent creative power, in their opposition to artificial art and its corresponding forms of life—which were dictated by false culture, forced by pedantic customs and which forbid every natural emotion, every free action of the mind—they regarded Shakspeare's masterpieces in an entirely one-sided manner; that is to say, they regarded them only from their *contrast* to the prevailing style of art, wholly overlooking the fact that the connection between Shakspeare and the ancient drama was, at least, as great as the difference between the two. This contrast when viewed abruptly and one-sidedly as a pure contrast turns of itself into a pure *contradiction*, that is, becomes an untenable, senseless extreme. For when Shakspeare was looked upon as *mere* nature, merely an impetuous genius blindly following the creative caprice of his imagination, it was a natural consequence that in the hands of his imitators nature would be converted into coarseness and vulgarity, freedom into wilfulness, grandeur and sub-

* *Etwas über Shakspeare.*

limity into grotesqueness and monstrosity, the unusual into eccentricity, humour into capriciousness, deep thought into craziness, and rich variety into wild, chaotic disorder. Such was the fate of a number of subordinate minds, who, in their self-sufficient conceit, thought themselves Shakspeares, simply because they had taken good notice of 'how he coughed and how he spat.'

This nonsense is most striking in *Lenz*. In his 'Remarks on the German Theatre,'* he declares point-blank that the ideal is a phantom of the brain, and that a caricature-painter ranks ten times higher than the painter of ideals, inasmuch as it requires ten times more power to represent a character with the accuracy and truth as seen by genius, than to hammer ten years at an ideal of beauty, which, after all, exists only in the brain of the artist who produced it. Imitation of nature, and moreover of 'stark-naked nature as God made it,' he considered the highest aim of art. This 'stark-naked nature' is therefore faithfully reflected in his poems; in other words, they exhibit the whole coarseness, the whole weakness, and the mental and moral perversity of a moderately-gifted man of immoderate conceit, small mind, and of instability and oddity of character.

Even *Herder* agreed, partly, at least, with the tone of these Shakspeare-enthusiasts. His 'Essay on Shakspeare'† is in reality but a stream of subjective effusions which, it is true, contains many profound thoughts worthy of the author, but yet is chiefly devoted to eulogising—in brilliant similes and imagery—Shakspeare's 'natural power,' the 'truth' of his representations, his creative greatness, his world-encompassing universality, without entering upon the peculiar character of his works or of his dramatic style. What Herder says in regard to the origin of the theatre of the North and of Greece, is unsatisfactory from an historical point of view, and does not sufficiently explain the difference between the Shakspearian and the ancient drama. On the other hand, a remark which he incidentally makes—that in order to represent events with as great a degree of truth as Shakspeare has done, it

* *Anmerkungen über das Deutsche Theater.*

† In the *Fliegende Blätter von Deutscher Art und Kunst* (1773).

is necessary that 'time and place shall always be *idealised* so that they may contribute to the illusion'—is as excellent as it is pregnant. With an ingenuity equally great, he points to the '*individuality* of each of the *plays*,' to the 'distinct and principal feeling pervading each play and animating it like a living soul.' In short, Herder maintains that Shakspeare *idealises* place and time, which both the French and the Greek drama left in their natural reality; in fact, that he not only 'individualised' the dramatic personages, but every play as a play, and that this may have constituted the real difference between him and the ancients in regard to the construction of the dramatic material.

Lessing, accordingly, had to wield his sword of criticism in two different directions; on the one hand against inveterate prejudices and old errors which did not come up to truth, and on the other against blinding misconceptions and youthful extravagances which outran truth. It did not at first seem as if his beautiful prophecy—that Shakspeare would awaken quite different geniuses among the German people than those called forth by the French poets—would be fulfilled. And yet with deep prophetic insight he had prophesied right.

For, as already said, not only had Shakspeare's plays excited upon the German stage an interest and an enthusiasm such as had never before been heard of, and perhaps will never occur again in the history of the German theatre, but Shakspeare's genius kindled in *Goethe* a genius which, in spite of essential differences, is the only one worthy of being placed by the side of the great Englishman. Goethe, as he himself says,* had become acquainted with Shakspeare's works even during his first stay in Leipzig through Dodd's '*Beauties of Shakespeare*;' and in his old age called this period one of the brightest epochs of his life. However, it was in Strasburg, in the society of Herder, Merk, Lenz and others, and with the assistance of Wieland's translation, that Goethe first penetrated deeper into the new, rich and glorious world which Shakspeare's poetry opened up to him. Of Herder's above-mentioned essay Goethe says, that it is 'a faithful

* His *Works*, vol. xxvi.

summary of all that which at that time had been thought and said of Shakspeare by the vigorous society for which the essay was written.' Goethe may have found it to contain many of his own thoughts; and no doubt also fully agreed with the opinions and the enthusiasm of Herder, Lenz and others, in regard to Shakspeare. Goethe himself says,* 'I do not remember that any book, or person, or event in my life ever produced so great an effect upon me as Shakspeare's plays. They seem to be the work of some heavenly genius who came down to men to make himself known to them in as gentle a manner as possible. They are no mere poems! We could fancy that we were standing before the gigantic books of Fate, through which the hurricane of life was raging, and violently blowing its leaves to and fro. I am so astounded by their strength and their tenderness, by their power and their peace, and my mind is so excited, that I long for the time when I shall again feel myself in a fit state to read further.'

This enthusiasm for Shakspeare perhaps laid a greater hold of Goethe; it certainly was deeper in his case than in any of the 'hot-blooded Rheinlanders' among whom he was then living. How greatly this enthusiasm, even in Goethe's case, exceeded all measure and bounds, is clear from his Satyr-play, *Helden, Götter und Wieland*, where he gives vent to his rage about Wieland's criticism of some of Shakspeare's plays and passages from them. However, in Goethe's case it did not remain blind enthusiasm. The glimpses he had had into Shakspeare's world incited him, as he himself says, 'more than anything else to make greater and more rapid progress in the active world, to mix with the full current of life, and one day to draw a few cupfuls out of the great ocean of true nature, so as to pour them from the stage towards his thirsting countrymen.' The first cupful from this ocean of true nature was his 'Götz von Berlichingen' (1773). Lessing's 'Minna von Barnhelm' (1773) and his 'Emilia Galotti' (1772)—in spite of their close affinity to Shakspeare—still present a classic feature which gives them Lessing's peculiar stamp; but in Goethe's 'Götz' we, as it were

* In his *Wilhelm Meister*.

feel a breath of pure Shakspearian air wafted towards us. And yet the piece is no mere imitation, it is in reality Goethe's sole and unconditional property, because notwithstanding the resemblance in the choice and treatment of the subject, as well as in language and characterisation, not only does it possess different laws of composition, and a different conception of tragedy, but, in fact, it is pervaded by a different spirit, and a different style is maintained.

Shakspeare's genius had, in fact, only *awakened* Goethe's, had only pointed out to him the general course towards which he had to direct his flight. This is most distinctly apparent in Goethe's second poetic production, which followed directly upon his 'Götz von Berlichingen.' For although his 'Werther's Leiden' (Sorrows of Werther), at a first glance appears totally different from anything of Shakspeare's, it nevertheless sprung forth from the same soil upon which his 'Götz' had arisen, and has as great a claim of relationship to Shakspeare as the latter. Goethe* himself describes the tones of mind—'the desponding overflow of feeling (*unmuthigen Uebermuths*), the elegiac sadness, and hopeless despair'—which had been called forth by the study of the English poets, and which had given rise to Werther's Letters, and then goes on to say: 'Curiously enough our father and teacher Shakspeare—who so well knows how to spread pure gaiety—has himself increased this despondency. Hamlet and his monologues are spirits which have run riot in all young minds. The principal passages all know by heart and are fond of reciting, and all fancy that there is no reason why they should not be as melancholy as the Prince of Denmark, even though they have seen no ghost and have no royal father's death to avenge.' In fact, as Gervinus, among others, has remarked, the whole *Sturm und Drang* period—one side of which is described in so masterly a style in the 'Sorrows of Werther'—may also be called the Hamlet-period. For, in fact, it characterises the same despondency in regard to the existing world, the same perplexity, the same thirst for great deeds worthy of a free spirit, which deeds were thwarted partly by the state

* His *Works*, vol. xxvi. p. 211 ff.

of circumstances, partly by their own want of power; in short, it was the same struggle of excited and aspiring minds with unfavourable, outward circumstances, in which Hamlet perishes. In the latter respect Lenz may even be said to be the poor and distorted likeness of the Prince, while Goethe's stronger nature both survived and overcame the unpropitious circumstances. For, as he had succeeded in preserving his independence against the powerful influences of Shakspeare, and, as it were, only made them the spiritual substance of his works, so he likewise overcame the Hamlet-Werther state of mind by forming it into poetical creations. In his 'Clavigo' and his 'Stella,' we still have the echoes of it, but in his 'Egmont' (which, as is well-known, was written long before its first appearance, and was merely revised and finished in 1759), we already meet with a fresh, clear spring of life, exuberant even to excess; hence he is again much more like the author of 'Hamlet' than like the hero of the drama.

Lessing's 'Minna von Barnhelm,' his 'Emilia Galotti' and Goethe's 'Götz von Berlichingen' were the first brilliant stars in the heavens of our so-called classic poetry. There is abundant evidence in the annals of German literature of how great and how powerful was the effect of these first German masterpieces, more especially of Goethe's first dramas. By one party in the country the author of 'Götz' was called 'The German Shakspeare' and greeted with enthusiasm, by the other he was censured and ridiculed, but gazed upon by all as a new and unheard-of phenomenon on the horizon of German poetry; he was also imitated, aped, and caricatured. It will be sufficient for our purpose here to call to remembrance the fact that it was these of Goethe's works (which had been suggested by Shakspeare) that paved the way by which Schiller followed him in his first productions — 'Die Räuber,' 'Fiesco,' and 'Kabale und Liebe.' Schiller, when but a boy of fourteen, had read Gerstenberg's 'Ugolino,' which so impressed his mind that he retained the impression of it even in his later years. Lessing's dramas, Müller's (the painter's) poems, and Leisewitz's 'Julius von Tarent' (1776) were his favourite books. But he was specially charmed with Goethe's 'Götz von Berlichingen.' About the

same time (1775-76), through Abel's assistance, he became acquainted with Shakspeare. And thereby—as Hoffmeister says—poetry in him became an all-inundating stream. For although, as Abel reports, Schiller at first felt it offensive that 'Shakspeare's coldness and want of sensitiveness could allow him to joke in the midst of the sublimest pathos,' still, according to his own words, Shakspeare's works 'carried him away like a mighty mountain torrent, and induced him to turn all his talent pre-eminently towards the drama.' Nay, in his criticism of his own play, 'The Robbers,' he expressly says: 'If its beauties do not show that the author was captivated by Shakspeare, all the more must this be evident from its extravagance.'

It cannot but be obvious to every one that Schiller's plays also—in spite of their acknowledged leaning to Shakspeare—are no mere imitations. They too are pervaded by a different and thoroughly original spirit; nay, in a certain sense, they differ more widely from the Shakspearian style than Goethe's 'Götz' and his 'Egmont.' In fact, the first blossoms of the classic period of German poetry had merely been fructified by Shakspeare's genius. Still it was Shakspeare nevertheless who gave the first impulse to the great revolution of taste in the domain of criticism, as well as in poetical production; it was he who first gave the new-born child of poetry its first education and training, and this gave a definite direction to the whole literature of Germany, to the prevailing striving after naturalness, fidelity and truth to nature, individuality and nationality. Accordingly the first stage of this classic period, down to Goethe's return from Italy, may justly be termed the Shakspeare-epoch.

The new direction entered upon at the second stage of this period, was the result of the different characters of its two representatives, Goethe and Schiller, and thus of the different influence which Shakspeare exercised upon them. In Schiller it had, from the first, a different source, and hence other consequences in its further development. For while Goethe and his associates were more especially charmed by the 'naturalness' of Shakspeare's representations, by his remarkably life-like delineation of all detail, by the deep psychological truth of his characterisation,

Schiller was even more charmed by the mighty *ethical* pathos and the wealth of *ideas* contained in Shakspeare's works. This was at first more a vague feeling than an actually recognised fact, because, as Schiller says, Shakspeare kept his ideas too much concealed between the fulness of individualities. Schiller's above-mentioned complaint of Shakspeare's coldness and want of sensitiveness was but the expression of a mind enthusiastic about the Idea which wished to find the same *personal* enthusiasm expressed in his favourite poet. However, Shakspeare's wealth of ideas, and in fact the whole *ideal* nature of his compositions, was subsequently more fully recognised by Schiller, and, therefore, Shakspeare became ever dearer to him.

This contrast in the characters of the two men explains how it was that 'the heavenly genius,' which Goethe had believed Shakspeare to be, gradually came to be looked upon as a 'demoniacal phenomenon,' and became disagreeable and offensive in the same degree as the lyric pathos of youth gave way to that *plastic* element of his nature, which left him so long in doubt as to whether he was not born to be a painter. The development of this element in Goethe's nature during his travels in Italy, made him turn his enthusiasm towards ancient art and poetry; and he congratulates himself for having, by means of his 'Götz' and 'Egmont,' 'once and for all rid himself of Shakspeare.' The new enthusiasm for the antique made him again favour the French style, and he began to work at the restoration of French tragedy upon the German stage, nay, he even gradually persuaded himself into the strange error that Shakspeare's plays were not created for the stage, not 'for the eyes of the body,' that they were untheatrical plays, mere 'conversations in actions, less sensuous deeds than spiritual words, extremely interesting stories, but only narrated by several masked personages.' Accordingly he disputed and ridiculed the 'senseless' opinion that they could appear on the boards unabridged and unaltered, and did not hesitate himself to turn 'Romeo and Juliet' into a piece, in conformity with the French classic principles, for the Weimar theatre. Lastly, he again raised the objection against the mixture

of tragedy and comedy, and called Mercutio and the Nurse 'ludicrous intermezzos,' who 'disturb the tragic character of the story, and on the stage must be intolerable to our correct logical mode of thinking which delights in harmony.' Goethe was thus consistently and gradually being driven on by this 'correct' mode of thinking, and by his love for the antique, to produce works which—as in the case of his 'Natürliche Tochter'—were no conversations *in* actions, but conversations *without* action. It was only in the latter years of his life that he again made friends with the old favourite of his youth, recalled his erroneous assertions, and again recommended Shakspeare to readers, poets, and actors as 'the best means of developing their powers.'

Meanwhile Schiller, the older he became the greater was his recognition of Shakspeare's genius, and he believed that a worthy representation of his plays would prove the greatest blessing to the German stage. At the end of the year 1797, in a letter to Goethe, he says: 'I have just been reading those plays of Shakspeare's which treat of the Wars of the Roses, and upon finishing "Richard III." find myself in a state of utter amazement. This last piece is one of the sublimest tragedies I know,' etc., and then adds, 'no play of Shakspeare's reminds me so much of the Greek tragedies. It would truly be worth the trouble, to adapt this whole series of eight plays for the German stage with all the means now in our power. It might introduce a new epoch.'* This passage gives expression to the fine æsthetic feeling with which Schiller (who, as we know from other passages in his works, so well understood the nature of ancient art and the deep irreconcilable contrast between it and modern art) recognised the internal affinity between the Shakspearian and the ancient drama; it also shows his correct, practical judgment in regarding the re-introduction of Shakspeare's plays—of course with some 'careful' or, as Lessing says, 'modest' alterations—upon the German stage and the raising of the stage itself, as signifying the same thing.

And yet not only did Schiller's adaptation of 'Macbeth'—which appeared in the theatre at Weimar some years

* *Briefwechsel mit Goethe*, iii. 290.

afterwards—injure the genius of Shakspeare by all kinds of æsthetically inadmissible alterations, but his own dramatic works differed more and more from the Shakspearian spirit and style in the same degree as they rose above his own youthful productions. In his ‘Don Carlos,’ and still more so in his ‘Wallenstein,’ Schiller too approached nearer to the ancient drama. However, this was not so much the result of Goethe’s leaning towards the ancient, *plastic* ideals, as his own inclination towards *ethical* and *philosophical* ideals; hence it proceeded more from an endeavour to reconcile the ancient drama with the modern, than to bring the latter into an ancient form. And, moreover, the modern drama was to him one and the same thing as the Shakspearian drama; in other words, Shakspeare continued to be an active agent in Schiller’s productive activity, and this alone is what I wished to intimate.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL. SCHLEGEL AND TIECK. GERMAN EDITIONS OF AND WORKS ON SHAKSPEARE.

THE year 1796-97—in which Schiller again turned decidedly to dramatic poetry, and ever after energetically pursued the direction described in our last chapter—has in another respect, also, become an important year for the history of Shakspeare in Germany.

August Wilhelm Schlegel had, in 1796, contributed the first specimens of his translation of Shakspeare to the 'Horen,' and victoriously driven off the field the old prejudice against verse in dramatic poetry, and during the years between 1797 and 1810 appeared his unrivalled translation of seventeen of Shakspeare's plays, a translation which will perhaps never be excelled. This is the first translation which, with truly genial skill, gives a faithful reflex not only of Shakspeare's thoughts, but also of their peculiar form, the remarkable alternation between prose and blank verse, and of Shakspeare's treatment of the latter,—in short, of Shakspeare's *style* in all its characteristic turns and metamorphoses. It is a notorious fact that it was this translation which has made the greatest of modern dramatic poets the spiritual property of the German nation, and which, so to say, has nationalised and Germanised him in the truest sense of the word, and made him one of our own flesh and blood. Its merits, therefore, cannot be too highly estimated. Tieck, in conjunction with some younger friends, completed the translation, and although his part of the work does not exhibit the same masterly skill, still it is done in a manner worthy of the highest praise.*

* Tieck's, and even Schlegel's translation has recently been carped at, and some have tried to circulate the opinion that it is full of faults and defects, and that, accordingly, it will be necessary to have a new

A. W. Schlegel, as is well-known, belonged to the so-called Romanticists. His translation was a fruit of this new branch on the tree of German literature, and was as much a product of the Romantic School as a foil to it, the support of its influence, and the lever of its development. It gave rise to a new spirit of enthusiasm among the younger aspiring minds. Shakspeare! in him alone are intellect, poetry and geniality! was the war-cry of a numerous band of vigorous champions who, like Goethe and his associates in former days, marched out in the exuberant conviction of their own worth against the prevailing æsthetic taste (which favoured besides Goethe and Schiller, even such writers as Iffland, Kotzebue, Lafontaine and others), as well as against other mental tendencies—more especially against so-called *illuminati*, men who pretended to special spiritual or intellectual enlightenment. In what way this new tendency had proceeded with historical consistency out of the historical development of the German mind, out of religious, political and social conditions, more especially out of poetry and literature itself, does not belong to our subject here. It is enough to know that this tendency stood in decided opposition to

translation, more especially as during the last fifty years our knowledge of the language and literature, of the manners and customs, etc., of the Shakspearian age, and thus of Shakspeare's own use of the language and his mode of expression, has made considerable progress. The last remark is perfectly correct, and has been discussed in our preceding Book. It is also quite true that Schlegel—principally because he did not possess this deeper knowledge—has often enough made blunders in individual points. But these blunders can, without difficulty or detriment to the whole, be rectified often by the mere alteration of a word or of a single line. Now-a-days, nothing is easier than to clothe a given subject in flowing, pleasant, and regular verse; this, considering the present highly poetical development of our language, is a merit which scarcely comes into consideration. But a *master* in the art of translation proves himself to be a master by his fine, penetrating appreciation of the inner mental peculiarity, and the poetic character of the foreign poet, by his sound and pure feeling for style, and by his ability to give expression to it in single words, as well as in the character and the construction of the whole, without injuring the genius of the German language. In this respect, I think, Schlegel still stands unrivalled, and this is the opinion also of acknowledged authorities such as Bernays, Delius, Freiligrath, Gildemeister, W. A. B. Hertzberg, Al. Schmidt, and others.

the path pursued by Goethe after his journey to Italy, and soon afterwards by Schiller also, for it turned to the spirit and poetry of the *Middle Ages*, whereas Goethe and Schiller inclined towards classic antiquity. This accordingly likewise determined their relation to Shakspeare. For while Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and men of kindred minds, followed that side of the double nature of Shakspeare's plays which belonged to the spirit of modern times, and while they admired the naturalness, the psychological truth of his characterisation, his wealth of thought, his acuteness of reflection, the ethical pathos of his representations, and the gigantic greatness of his subjects,—the Romantic School followed that side of Shakspeare's works which was turned towards the Middle Ages and revelled in the fantastic element; in the *bizarre* ideas and the strange creations of a free and unfettered imagination; in the ingenious symbolisms and reflexes from the regions of the marvellous; in the magic and the supernatural, in short, in the romantic *chiaro-scuro* which pervades Shakspeare's poetry. This side was naturally connected with the humorous element in Shakspeare, in so far as humour may be called the wit of the fancy, fantastic wit. They also directed their attention to *form*, and indeed not only of language but also to the form of the dramatic composition, to the style of its scenic representation, in other words, to the individual and characteristic features of Shakspeare's style.

This new conception formed a new epoch in the history of the Shakspearian drama. For inasmuch as the Romantic School separated it from its connection with the ancient drama, and regarded it more as a product of modern times born of the Middle Ages, they could not but be specially qualified and inclined to investigate its *history*, and to conceive it in a true light. *Schlegel and Tieck* have in this respect done great service; Schlegel more especially by his *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, the value of which I have already spoken of on p. 451. But even more important are the services which have been rendered by the Romanticists in the domain of *æsthetic criticism*. Their sound knowledge of mediæval, as well as of ancient art and poetry, their

preference for the former, and their historical studies of these, could not but lead them to the conviction, that the formation of the English national theatre, and more especially of the Shakspearian drama, was not only based upon different historical foundations, but also upon different æsthetic fundamental views, from those of ancient art. This conviction was the starting-point of their style of criticism, which, accordingly, was directed more particularly to the æsthetic appreciation of the national and individual *characteristics* of Shakspeare's works. Schlegel, Tieck, Solger, and others, may, therefore, to some extent, be said to have completed Lessing's style of criticism. For while the latter aimed more at pointing out the internal *agreement* of Shakspeare's works with the real nature of ancient art, and with the true significance of the Aristotelian rules, in order to bring the great poet nearer to the prevailing classic taste of the age, the former set forth the *difference* between the two, and endeavoured to exhibit the *peculiar* formation of Shakspeare's plays and their poetical character in it. They have done great service as regards the apprehension of Shakspeare's special beauties, and of the characteristic peculiarities of his style, and as regards the correct appreciation of individual singularities, and of apparent defects and faults, in short, as regards the æsthetic understanding of *single features*. But they did not succeed in discovering the general laws of art which form the basis of Shakspeare's style, although it was only through the explanation of these that the peculiarly Shakspearian form of the drama could be justified from an æsthetic point of view. They failed in this because, on the one hand, their attention was directed too exclusively to individualities, peculiarities, and single features, and because, on the other hand, they clung too one-sidedly to the mediæval form of art, and thus theoretically conceived the nature of poetry to consist merely in the free, uncontrolled play of the creative imagination, and the nature of art itself, in a shapeless ideality, in a mere reference to the substance of the idea unrepresentable in itself, and incapable of being brought into any form on account of its infinite nature (Solger); they

ultimately even went so far as to conceive poetry to consist in Frederick Schlegel's notorious idea of irony. From these theoretical points of view the more they endeavoured to understand Shakspeare and to recognise his greatness, the more he seemed to them 'the incomprehensible' and 'the unfathomable,' simply because, in fact, genius is absolutely the general creative imagination *par excellence*. And conversely the unfathomable Shakspeare became the main stay for those one-sided theories. In fact, they saw in him nothing but fantastic humour, genial exuberance, and creative freedom; in short, only that side of the poet where his poetry rises above historical reality and actual life, and which certainly does seem only to play with it; they, however, wholly overlooked, or at least did not take into account, that this idealism of Shakspeare's is based upon the soundest and soberest knowledge of real life, that it is but the poetry of real life, and therefore, at the same time, represents life in its unvarnished truth. Nay, in being so engrossed with individual features and peculiarities, and in losing sight of general features, by which after all the former are in all cases determined, they were even occasionally wrong in their criticism of individual points. This, I think, I have already proved as regards Tieck's opinion of some of Shakspeare's doubtful plays. The first steps in the investigation of the above-mentioned general rules of Shakspeare's style, and hence their first æsthetic justification, were reserved for the later days of German æsthetic science, as a result of its own further development.

This conception of Shakspeare, which forms the foundation of the criticism of the Romanticists, appears to penetrate and determine their own poetical productions. Shakspeare is evidently the prototype of their artistic activity; as a few decades previously he had aroused from their sleep the geniuses of Goethe, of Schiller and their young associates, so he a second time awakened to poetry—and particularly to dramatic poetry—the talents of a number of highly-gifted minds. This is not the place to enter into a close examination of Tieck, Novalis, and of the two Schlegels, of Arnim Bretano, Fouqué, and others. Our only object here is to place their relation to

Shakspeare in a correct light. It is obvious at a glance that they again one-sidedly emphasise that side of Shakspeare which is turned towards the Middle Ages—the romantic, fantastic, and humorous—and consequently in them it is carried beyond its proper measure. But upon a closer examination, even as regards this one side, there is manifestly a deep and decided contrast between Shakspeare and the Romanticists. Shakspeare's humour and Shakspeare's fantastic creations are always, as it were, mounted on the foil of a strong manly character, of an energetic will, and of a fresh and vigorous action; they have everywhere, so to say, action in themselves, at least they appear everywhere permeated, incarnated and condensed into firm and pregnant forms owing to Shakspeare's realistic appreciation for active, historical life. What Shakspeare the poet has conceived in the free flight of his imagination, Shakspeare the historian, the politician, the man of the world, has, as it were, put into words, and his very ghosts, witches, and elves, therefore, are always thoroughly *dramatic*.

In our Romanticists, on the other hand, the fantastic element possesses a *lyric* character, and, therefore, appears in many ways infected by personal peculiarities, temporary tones of mind, individual inclinations, sympathies and antipathies, or is, at least, more or less arbitrarily constructed, whereby it degenerates into the *bizarre*. Their wit and humour is clever, but, on the one hand, like volatile ether, too spiritualistic, too shapeless; and on the other hand, owing to its lyrico-subjective foundation, is affected by personal inclinations or definite tendencies of the age, and thus frequently becomes a personal satire. For the same reason, their mystic element borders upon mysticism, upon far-fetched mysteriousness, making all life a mere dark enigma, and enveloping everything in a kind of mist. Their poetic creations, accordingly, are wanting in flesh and blood, they are often but scantily-clothed schemes of general ideas, or vanish in the thin ether of mystic idealism, in the mistiness of indefinite feelings, of strange unaccountable states of mind and half-born thoughts. Even Tieck is not free from these faults. In short, the Romanticists have something of

Shakspeare's spirit, it is true, but they lack its principal element, his *formative, organizing* power, his lofty *ethical* pathos, and his profound *historical* mind; when these three elements are wanting, acuteness of intellect and depth of reflection, mind, wit, and imagination are, in poetry, always thrown away to no purpose. At all events, without them we can have no poetical composition in the highest sense of the word, and in any case no *drama*. The conciliation, however, which later poets, such as Zach. Werner, Müllner, Grillparzer, Houwald and others, attempted to bring about between the romantic and Schiller's conception of dramatic art, only effaced the peculiarities of both without making one step in advance. For Schiller himself had little of the plastic element in his nature, and still less of the sober, objective, historical spirit; and the above-named poets, very far from appropriating this little of Schiller's mind, adopted only his subjective idealism, his subjective ethical pathos, or (like Müllner) caricatured the ancient idea of Destiny by the mystico-romantic interpretation they gave it. In other words, they made the subjective element only more subjective, and thus separated themselves the more from Shakspeare's ideal of dramatic poetry.

Shakspeare seems, accordingly, to have twice reappeared in the poetical literature of Germany in a double form, but was both times conceived in a one-sided manner, and, so to say, cut in two. The two forms do indeed mutually complete one another, but still they cannot be made to unite, so as to make one harmonious whole. As regards Germany, Shakspeare as a whole may be said to be still in the grave; for Shakspeare is pre-eminently Shakspeare as an *historian*, as a poet of *history*. Not that his tragedies and his comedies are not essentially a part of his nature, and in every feature bear the impress of the peculiarly Shakspearian character; but in his historical plays Shakspeare is pre-eminently himself, inasmuch as his style, the peculiar form which dramatic art has acquired on the English national stage, and which is and will remain the fundamental type of the modern drama, appears there in its most striking individuality and clearness. In fact, his historical plays reveal the spirit of modern poetry

in its characteristic form. For neither ancient nor mediæval art was able to produce the historical drama; it is absolutely a product of modern times. Shakspeare's historical plays, moreover, appear even less affected by the above-mentioned accidental peculiarities, failings, and confusion of taste which accompany every separate age, than his comedies, and even less than his great master-pieces in tragedy. Hence they have, perhaps, the greatest claim to be regarded and used as models for the new formation of our dramatic art. And yet it is just these plays which have hitherto exercised least influence in awakening and developing the drama. Goethe, Schiller, Uhland, Immermann, Grabbe, and all those who shared Goethe's and Schiller's conception of the drama, have indeed frequently handled historical subjects. But they more or less regarded the historical material simply as material into which the poet had but to breathe the breath of poetry, not as a substance which itself already contained poetry. Accordingly, they generally disposed of history in such an arbitrary manner that in the end it no longer was history, and the drama anything but a historical drama.

In more recent times Raupach, Rückert, and a number of younger poets, have again applied themselves to historical drama. But Raupach drowns history in beautiful phrases, lyric effusions, and torrents of rhetorical sentences, and gives the historical fact but the outward garb of poetry, without suspecting how much true poetry lies concealed beneath the outer fact in the historical idea which determines it. Rückert, on the other hand, so to say, unembodies the historical idea: he divests it of its living, concrete form, of the historical individuality which it possesses in the several, actual circumstances and relations, in the accidental incidencies and in the peculiar characters of the supporters of the action and their personal interests, resolves, emotions and passions. He thus represents the great historical personages as mere tools of the historical idea, and the latter itself in its philosophical, unpoetical nakedness; in other words, he exhibits the motionless, dry skeleton, not the living and full form of history. Lastly, a number of younger and

highly gifted dramatists mix the passing tendencies of the age with the historical past, and thus not only disfigure the internal truth, but the external beauty of history, inasmuch as they disturb the living organism in its form, and the inner harmony in its several parts; hence their works give evidence that they are working more in the service of the so-called spirit of the age than in that of poetry and history. It is only the few—among whom Emanuel Geibel stands prominently forward—that have any clear idea of the object of a historical drama.

Whether Shakspeare will a third time arise in German literature, and help us to produce the truly historical drama in the higher sense required by our progressive culture, is not merely a question as regards literature, but a question of ethico-political, national, and historical importance. The vigorous and more realistic spirit which has been awakened in the German nation, and which has recently manifested itself in warlike deeds of the greatest renown, promises well for the future, if it does not—as unfortunately is to be feared—ultimately entirely destroy all the ideal elements, and lead to that common practical realism which makes the object of human life to consist solely in making nature subservient to its wants, in procuring merely the so-called enjoyments of life, and a vain luxury which aims at childish splendour, devoid of form or thought.

At all events, it is well that the study of Shakspeare and the influence of his poetry still continues to exist; this incessantly points towards the goal and maintains the ideal interests in a number of noble aspiring minds. The numerous translations of Shakspeare by J. H. Voss and his sons (1818), J. Meyer (1824), J. W. O. Benda (1825), J. Körner (1836), A. Böttger and H. Döring (1836), A. Fischer, E. Urtlepp, A. Keller and M. Rapp, O. L. Wolff, E. W. Sievers, F. Jenken—which followed Schlegel's, but did not approach his*—are for the most part mere speculations of publishers, who were likewise anxious to profit by the enthusiasm for Shakspeare. But they nevertheless

* Ph. Kaufmann's translation (1830 f.) alone, which however has remained unfinished, may, to some extent, be said to come up to Schlegel's.

prove that the enthusiasm, in spite of the trouble taken to suppress it, is not yet dead, at any rate that there is still a great demand for Shakspeare's works. This is further proved by the many editions of Schlegel and Tieck's translation, as well as by the new undertakings of *Friedrich Bodenstedt* and *Franz Dingelstedt*, who, in conjunction with a number of distinguished poets have recently begun to publish two new translations of Shakspeare which are intended to eclipse Schlegel and Tieck's. These two editions, as well as the revisal which is being made of Schlegel and Tieck's translation,* testify to an advance in the treatment of our German Shakspeare in so far as both editions are to be furnished throughout with historical, critical, and explanatory introductions and notes.

To these translations may be added the following works: *Tieck's* 'Alt-englisches Theater' (1811) and his 'Vorschule Shakspeare's' (1823); *E. von Bülow's* 'Alt-englische Schaubühne' (1831); *N. Delius's* 'Mythus von W. Shakspeare, eine Kritik der Shakspeare'schen Biographien' (1851), his 'Shakspeare-Lexicon' (1852) and his treatise, 'Ueber das Englische Theaterwesen zu Shakspeare's Zeit' (1853) *Fr. Bodenstedt's* 'Zeitgenossen Shakspeare's und ihre Werke in Charakteristiken und Uebersetzungen' (4 vols., 1858), etc. These works have been the means of making German readers acquainted with the history of Shakspeare and his times, with the character of the dramatic poets by whom he was surrounded, with the peculiarities of his language, and with the arrangement of the stage in those days, and have also been the means of promoting the understanding of his plays. This was also the object of such works as 'Quellen des Shakspeare in Novellen, Märchen und Sagen,' by *J. Echtermeyer*, *L. Hentschel* and *K. Simrock* (1831), as well as of the many German versions of the best English works upon the history, the criticisms and the explanation of Shakspeare's plays.

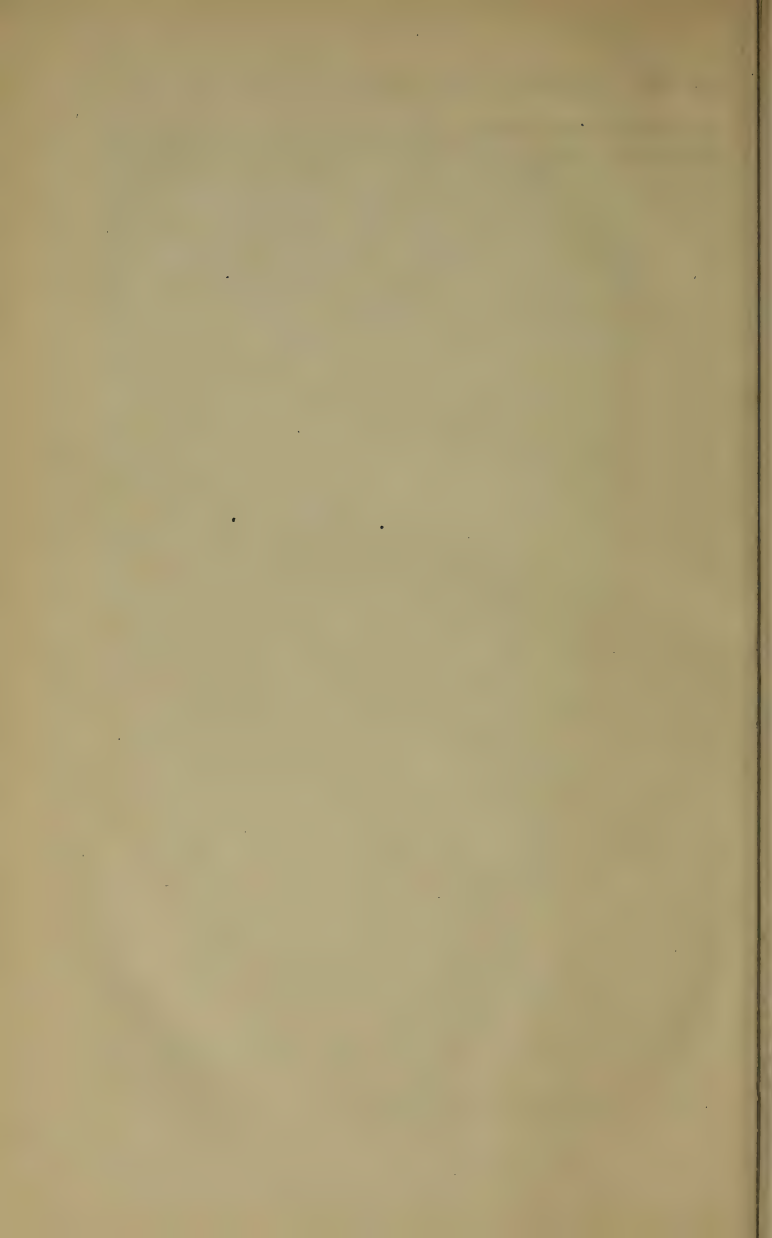
It is, however, more particularly the *æsthetic* consideration of Shakspeare's plays that continues to engage the interest of the German artistic mind and German inquiry.

* Undertaken by the German Shakspeare Society with the view to free this masterpiece in the art of translation from its few faults and defects.

The science of æsthetics is essentially a creation of the German mind. In all the æsthetic systems of Solger, Hegel (Hotho), F. Th. Vischer, A. Zeising, M. Carrière, etc., Shakspeare plays a prominent part. Nay, the ascendancy of this æsthetic interest has covered the tree of German Shakspeare literature with such an amount of parasites, that they threaten to choke the growth of the tree itself. There would be no end were I to adduce all the great and little treatises which, since Goethe's *Shakspeare und Seine Ende*, have either discussed the Shakspearian drama in general, or endeavoured from an æsthetic point of view, to elucidate individual plays and the inner connection of the action, to describe the fundamental features of the character of his heroes, or to discover his leading ideas. Indeed, it would scarcely be worth the trouble; for, to judge from many of these treatises, it seems almost as if every novice in the domain of æsthetics considered himself entitled at once to bring forward his thoughts and ideas, however, unimportant and untenable they may be. I shall therefore not mention any of the many monographs, not even such as are able and deserving of recognition, and shall name only those works which embrace a wider field, or are distinguished either by profundity of conception and acuteness of judgment, or by sound study, not only of Shakspeare's works but also of the history of Shakspeare and his poetry. Among these, we may mention *H. T. Rötcher's* 'Cyclus dramatischer Character' (1844); *F. Th. Vischer's* 'Kritische Gänge' (Parts 1-5, 1844); *G. G. Gervinus's* 'Shakespeare' (1849; 3rd edition, 1862); *F. Kressig's* 'Vorlesungen über Shakespeare, seine Zeit und seine Werke' (1858); *C. Hebler's* 'Aufsätze über Shakespeare' (1865); *H. von Friesen's* 'Briefe über Shakespeare's Hamlet' (1864); and if, in conclusion, I also add *G. Rümelin's* 'Shakspeare-studien' (1866), I do so because I am convinced that this ingenious work also, in spite of its, in most cases, unjustified polemic against Shakspeare and the German reverence for Shakspeare, will only contribute to the study of the poet, and promote the appreciation of his value as the leading, and—in spite of his faults and defects—the greatest genius in dramatic poetry.

But the most striking testimony of the love and devotion

with which the German nation still tends and cherishes its adopted son by the side of its own great children, is the *German Shakspeare Society*, which was founded at Weimar on the 300th anniversary of Shakspeare's birth. It has given sufficient proof of its vitality by the ten volumes of its *Jahr-buch*, which have already appeared, and by the work it has undertaken in the revisal of Schlegel and Tieck's translation of Shakspeare, several volumes of which have already been published.



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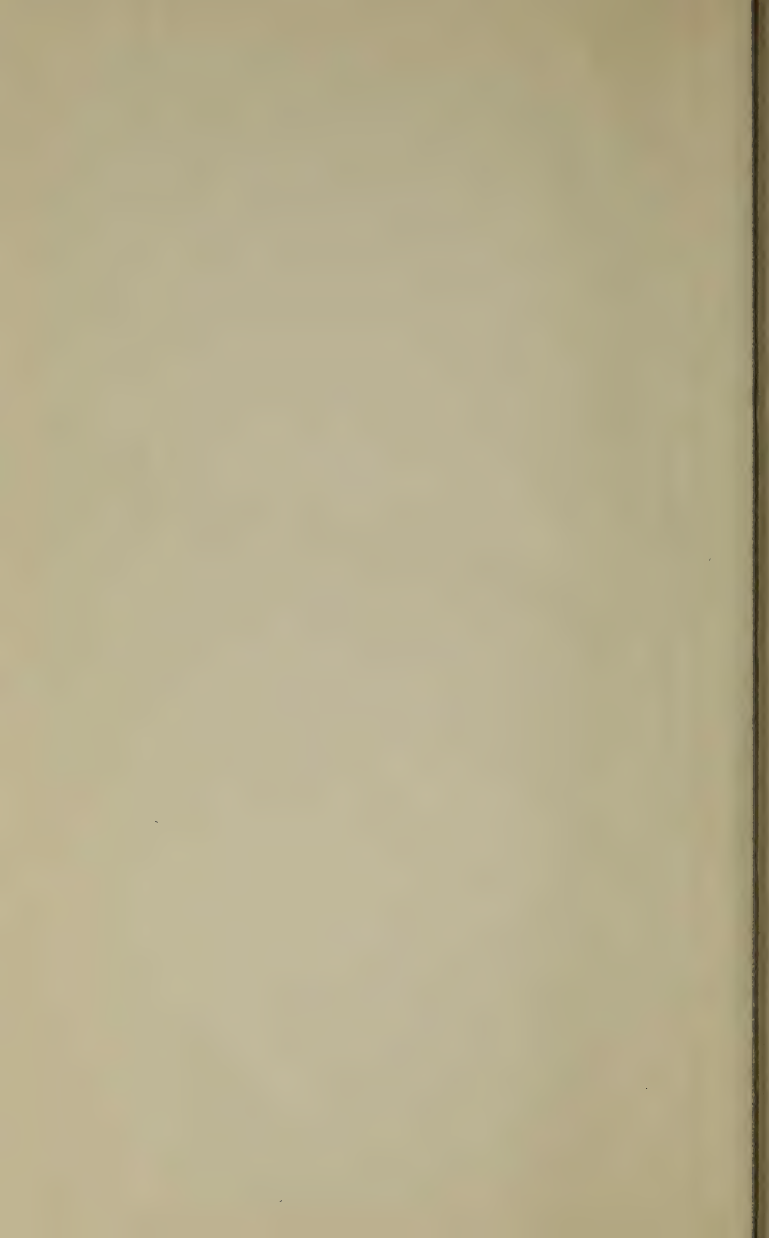
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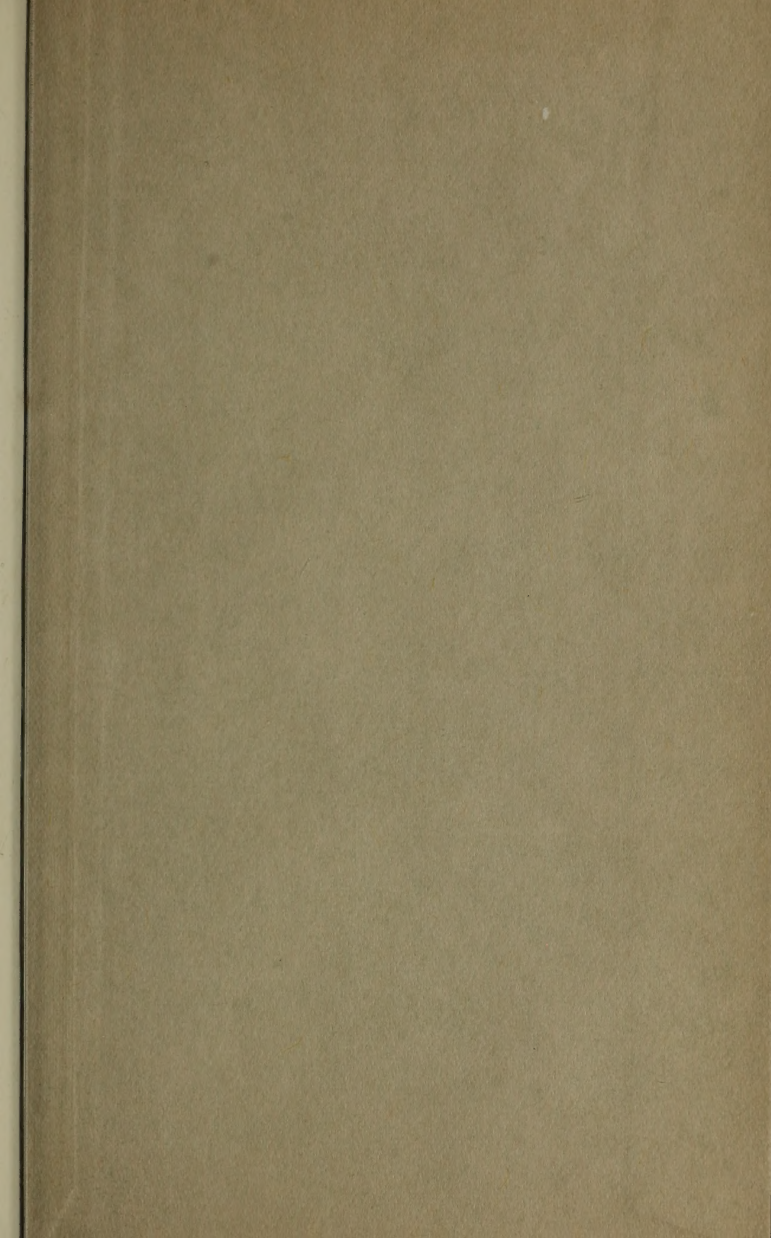
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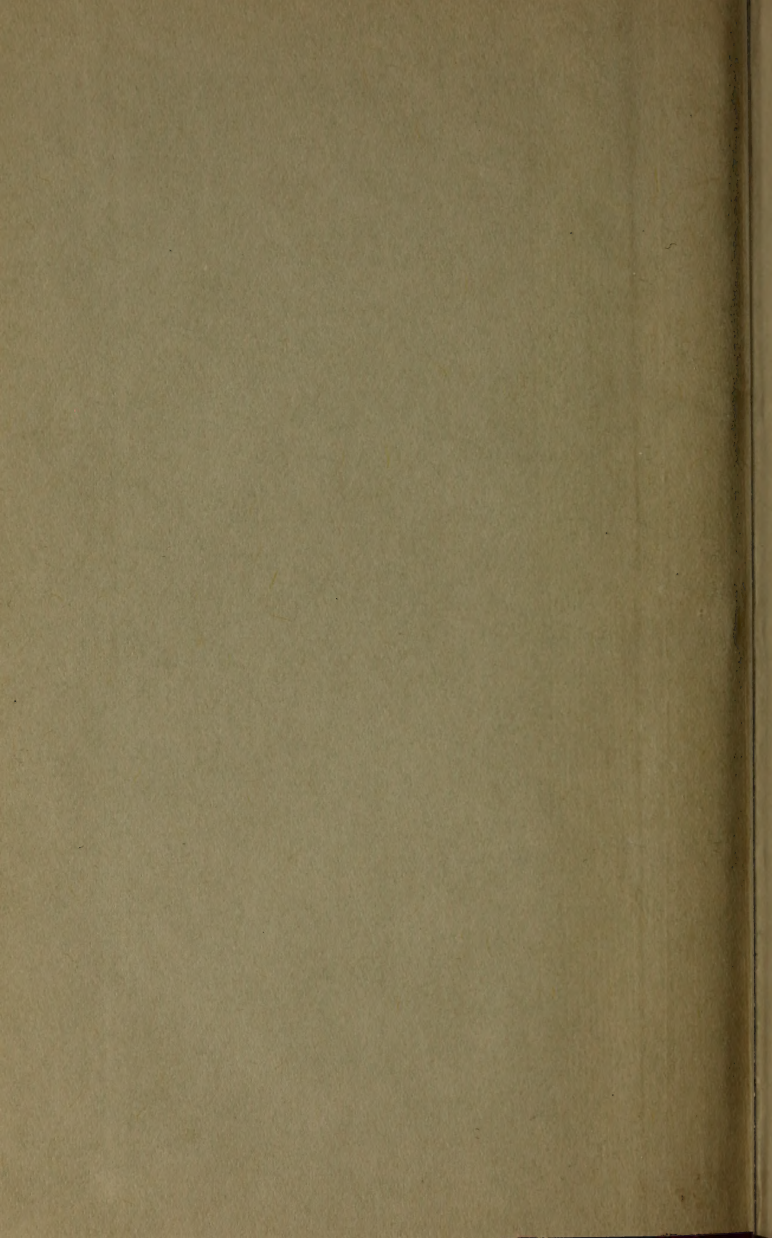
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